**LETTER WRITING**

Letters in English should be brief and clear. Your sentences should be short. Do not use contracted forms (‘s, n’t) in business letters.

There are several types of letters: letter of application, complaint, apology, thanks, request, answer to a job ad, complaint about an invoice, order, delivery, a letter to book tickets and accommodation…

1. **Salutation and complimentary close**

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| --- | --- |
| **Opening** | **Ending** |
| Dear Sir(s) | Yours faithfully |
| Dear Madam | Yours faithfully |
| Dear Mr X | Yours sincerely |
| Dear Mrs X | Yours sincerely |
| Dear Ms X (when you don’t know whether or not she is married) | Yours sincerely |
| Dear Miss (désuet) |  |

1. **Body of the letter**

Make sure the tone of your letter is not too direct or brusque. Use these expressions to soften the tone: *Please… / Would you please…/ Could you please…/ I would appreciate it if you…./ I am sorry that… / I apologize for…*

Make sure that your letter end on a positive note: *We look forward to your visit / letter / hearing from you / working with you / doing further business with you…*

1. **Layout**

There are 2 nowadays two common layouts:

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| The “semi-blocked” or “indented layout” (this is very traditional) | The “blocked” layout is probably the easiest to remember. Everything is lined on the left. It is very modern. |
| Paragraphs are indented (en alinéa)  The sender’s address, the closing and the signature are towards the right. | Paragraphs begin on the left with a double space between them.  The headings, salutation, closing and signature are all on the left. |

The “blocked layout”

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| Sender’s name  Sender’s address  Date  Receiver’s name  Receiver’s address  (Attn: Sales Manager)  (Re: Customer complaint)  (Reference)  Dear Mr X,  We …….(body of the letter)  Yours sincerely,  Peter Rabbit  Chief buyer  Enc: 1 |

1. **To the attention of**

After the receiver’s address (which is always on the left) you may want to include the exact name of the receiver. This is usually written on the left, but sometimes firms write it across the entire width of the paper in capital letters for more impact.

To the attention of Mr X / to the attention of Mr X / for the attention of Mr X / Attention: Mr X, Sales Manager

1. **The date**

DO NOT put the name of the town in front of the date.

Write the date completely in numbers! If you write “09/02/03” it could be very confusing: it means February 9th 2003 in British English but September 2nd 2003 in American English.

There are several ways to write the date : 23 January 2003 / 23rd January 2003 / January 23, 2003 / January 23rd 2003

1. **Object of the letter**

This is put directly under the receiver’s address, or just under “to the attention of”. However, some companies like to put objects after the salutation “dear Sir”. There are different accepted forms:

*Object: Your letter of September 1st / Obj: delivery delay / Subject: offer of service / Subj: Ordern°123/ Re: Terms of sale*

1. **Reference numbers**

If you receive a letter with a reference number, you should use the number when writing your reply. It is most frequently placed after “object” but it is sometimes put before or after the receiver’s address.

1. **Ending the letter**

A letter always ends on a complimentary note. This should match the opening greeting. “Yours sincerely” where the individual is named or “Yours faithfully” where the salutation is “Mr X” or similar.

“Faithfully yours” or “sincerely yours” sound a bit pompous.

“Best wishes” can be used if you know your correspondent well and have addressed him as “Dear Jack” or something similar.

Then you sign and immediately below you add your name.

1. **Enclosures**

Enclosures are always indicated in the bottom left corner of your letter.

Here are a few examples: *Enc. 1 brochure / Enc: 1 price list / ENC: 2 copies of insurance policy / Encl: 2 price list enclosed.*