

Letters

Formal business correspondence is usually done by letter as this leaves a written record which can be kept for reference. Business letters can be of different types with different purposes: to apply for a job, to inform people of developments, to request action, to make an enquiry, to complain, etc. To write a successful business letter you need to use the right tone and to communicate your message to the reader using straightforward language. The way a letter is written reveals a lot about the person who is writing it and it also sends a message about the organisation that he or she is working for. It is, therefore, very important to make sure that the information, layout, style and spelling are all correct before you send it.

Layout

When writing a business letter, you should follow the standard format. The letter opposite shows where the following different components should appear on the page.

- a letterhead / address (but not name) of writer
- b name and address of recipient
- c references
- d date
- e opening
- f subject heading
- g body of the letter
- h closing
- i signature
- j name and job title
- k enclosures

Language styles

Business letters are usually quite formal in style. A conversational style is therefore not appropriate and you should avoid contractions, for example. Try to use verbs in the active and not in the passive form as

this will make your letter more dynamic. You should also avoid writing sentences that are too long and that include complicated or unnecessary language. A straightforward letter will get your message across more effectively than a long wordy one. There are certain conventions concerning the correct way to address people and to close your letter.

Opening Letters always start with *Dear ...* followed by the correct form of address. If the letter is going to someone whose name you do not know, it starts with *Dear Sir*, or *Dear Madam*, or *Dear Sir or Madam, ...* . But if you do know the name, then you can begin with *Dear Mr / Ms Taylor*, or *Dear Greg Taylor, ...* .

Closing Letters are usually closed in standard ways. At the end of your letter you should include a short sentence like *I look forward to hearing from you*, or *Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information*. Below that, you should put a closing phrase:

Yours sincerely, (formal, for letters beginning *Dear* + name)

Yours faithfully, (formal, for letters beginning *Dear Sir / Madam*)

Yours truly, / *Best regards*, / *Best wishes*, (less formal)

Useful phrases and notations

Following our recent telephone conversation ...

I am writing to you to confirm ...

Thank you for taking the time to ...

Regarding the question of ...

I think you will agree that ...

We are sorry for any inconvenience caused.

I am enclosing full contact details.

enc (shows that something is enclosed)

cc (copy sent to another person)

PS (for additional sentence(s) included after the signature)

Sample letter (of confirmation)

HPSempra Systems Inc
Conway Industrial Estate
Hartlepool
HPL 7GN
United Kingdom
(+44) 00723 91847
mark@sales/sempra.org

a

b

Jeanne Eckhart
Optecol
31 Rue Jules Welter
Sanem
L-4902
Luxembourg

c

Our ref: TS50.001

d

21 May 200_

e

Dear Ms Eckhart,

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TS50 Delivery

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Following our recent telephone conversation, I am writing to you to confirm the arrangements for the delivery of the TS50 test simulator that you ordered through our Brussels office. As I mentioned, a team of engineers from our UK and German offices will be attending the engineering trade show in Hanover from 1–3 July. Our stand at the show will feature a number of new products and test stations, including the first production model of the TS50, which is being shipped over from the UK especially for the event.

The show closes its doors on the evening of the third, and we will arrange for the simulator to be dismantled and packed on to a flatbed truck for delivery to you directly. The transportation will be handled by the same freight company that is looking after the logistics for the show, TransMax, and I am enclosing full contact details with this letter. I have already spoken with their director, Mr Wolfgang Hartung, and he is awaiting confirmation from your side before proceeding with the delivery.

Jane Bradley, the sales engineer who will be in charge of our stand, will be available to travel to your plant on the Thursday after the show, and she will provide assistance with the final installation and configuration of the machine during the following two days.

I will not personally be present at the fair but Ms Bradley will be able to answer any queries you may have. I know that this is an unusual delivery procedure but I think it is an interesting opportunity for you to save the cost and time delay of normal delivery from the UK.

I look forward to doing business with you in the future and thank you again for placing one of the first orders for the TS50. I am sure it will give you complete satisfaction.

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Yours sincerely,

i

Mark Rathbone

j

Mark Rathbone
Sales Manager

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enc