

Topic 14:

A formal letter.

Using formal language



In today's Internet- and email-driven society, the need to write a formal letter arises less often than in the past. However, it is still occasionally necessary to present a formal letter to obtain information



What is the language of formal letter?

A **formal letter** is one written in a **formal** and ceremonious **language** and follows a certain stipulated format. Such **letters** are written for official purposes to authorities, dignitaries, colleagues, seniors, etc and not to personal contacts, friends or family.



What is the meaning of formal letter?

The term **formal letter** can be used to entail any written **letter** for a **formal** purpose, whether that be a recommendation **letter**, an invitation **letter**, a complaint **letter** and so on



Types of Formal Letter

- ***Letter of Enquiry.***
- ***Order Letter.***
- ***Letter of Complaint.***
- ***Reply to a Letter of Complaint.***
- ***Promotion Letter.***
- ***Sales Letters.***
- ***Recovery Letters.***





Be concise



State the purpose of your formal letter in the first paragraph and don't veer from the subject. Try to avoid flowery language or long words. Keep the letter short and to the point:

“A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline.”



Use the right tone

A business or formal letter should be written in a tone that is slightly more formal than your everyday language.

Avoid the following: slang or jargon; contractions such as *I'm*, *can't*, *it's*; and vague words such

as *good* and *nice*. Be polite and respectful, even if you are complaining. Take a look at our formal letter example to see what tone is appropriate.

Proofread

Proofreading is so important. Once you have written your formal letter, check the grammar and spelling carefully. Use the spell-checker on your computer and then read the letter over yourself as the spellchecker will not catch every error. Use a dictionary or thesaurus, if necessary. Check the grammar and punctuation for correctness and make sure the sentences are complete





Use proper format and presentation

Remember that the first impression is the one that lasts. Use good quality paper and a matching envelope for your formal letter. Make sure the recipient is addressed properly and that his or her name is spelled correctly. Equally important—don't forget to sign the letter!





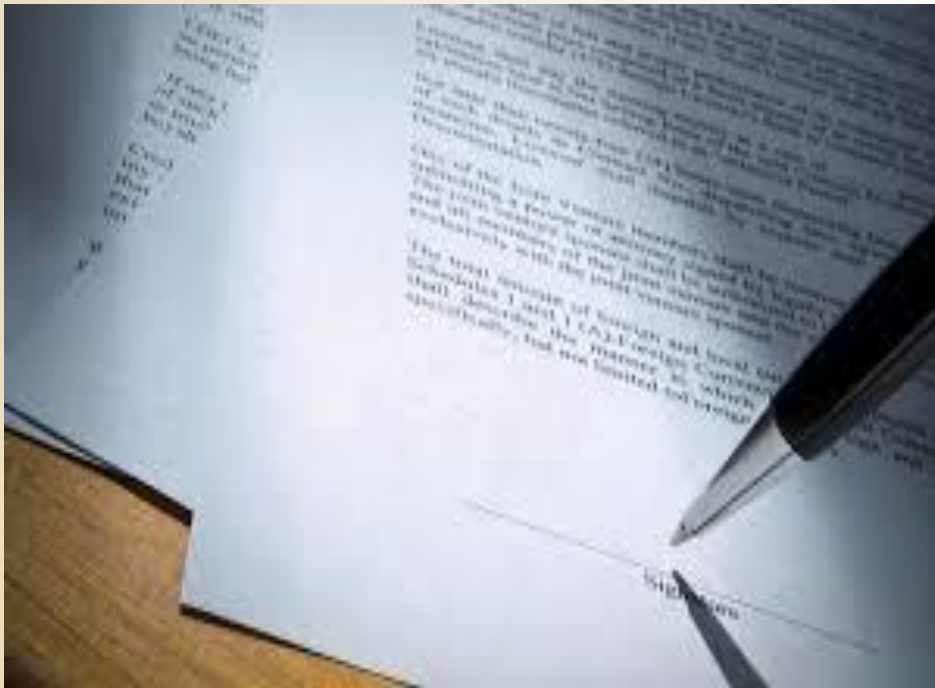
Heading

The heading consists of your address (but not your name) and the date. Telephone numbers and email addresses are not usually included here, but they are acceptable. Using block format, the heading goes in the top left-hand corner of the page.

**123 Elm Ave.
Treesville, ON M1N 2P3
November 23, 2008**

Salutation

Skip one line after the inside address and then type the salutation. Your choice of salutation depends on whether or not you know the intended recipient of the formal letter. The most usual greeting is





Dear

followed by the person's name and punctuated with a colon. If you don't know whether the person you are addressing is a man or a woman, you may begin with

Dear Sir or Madam:

again followed by a colon.

Ms.

may be used if you don't know the marital status of a woman. Furthermore, if the person has a specific title such as

Dr.

make sure that you use it. Here are some examples of each salutation:

- *Dear Mr. Trunk:*
- *Dear Ms. Root:*
- *Dear Mrs. Branch:*
- *Dear Dr. Acorn:*

Body

Skip one line after the salutation and begin typing the body of the formal letter. This is the main part of the letter. Keep in mind the rules outlined above regarding brevity and coherence. It is best to use short, clear, logical paragraphs to state your business.





Closing and Signature

This is the end of the letter. Skip one line after the last paragraph of the body of the letter and type the closing. Only the first word of the closing should be capitalized. It is punctuated with a comma. Leave several lines after the closing and type (or print) your signature. Your actual handwritten signature is to be inserted between these two printed lines, written in ink.

Yours sincerely,

***Write a formal letter
(job application)***

