

Writing Letters

In this lesson, you'll begin by mastering the basics of proper letter formatting, including the nuances of dates, salutations, and closings. You'll also learn the skill of addressing envelopes and creating concise yet impactful postcards. Though handwritten letters may be considered old-fashioned or even antiquated, they provide a personal, effective method for communicating in an offline setting. Dive into see what they're all about!

Formatting and Sending Handwritten Letters

Handwritten letters are considered by many to be more advantageous than emails because they have a personal and sincere feel. When you write a letter by hand, it shows you care and put thought into it. You can touch and hold the letter, creating a strong connection between you and the person receiving it. Plus, you can keep letters as special mementos, unlike emails that can easily get lost in your inbox. In a world where we use digital messages a lot, handwritten letters provide a slower, more heartfelt way to connect.

Each letter you write should include the following key elements:

1. **Date:** The date is usually written at the top of the letter, indicating when it was written. This helps provide context and allows the recipient to know when the letter was composed.
2. **Salutation (Greeting):** The salutation is the greeting at the beginning of the letter, addressing the recipient. Common salutations include "Dear [Recipient's Name]," and it sets a warm and respectful tone for the letter.
3. **Body:** The body of the letter contains the main message or content you want to convey. It's where you share your thoughts, feelings, information, or stories with the recipient. This is the heart of the letter.
4. **Closing:** The closing is a courteous way to end your letter. Common closings include "Sincerely," "Yours truly," or "Best regards." It should match the tone of your letter and express your sentiment toward the recipient.
5. **Signature:** Your signature at the end of the letter confirms your identity as the sender. It adds a personal touch to the letter and signifies that the message is genuinely from you.
6. **Postscript (P.S.):** A postscript is an optional addition after the closing and signature. It's used to include something you forgot to mention in the main body of the letter or to emphasize a particular point. It's a way to add a personal note or thought.

You may choose to leave out one or more of these elements, depending on the message you're trying to convey or the person receiving them. Your audience plays a major role in how you write the letter, especially when it comes to style and tone.

Here's an overview of what to include and leave out of some of the most common types of letters:

1. Personal Letter

- Date: **Include** (to provide context on when it was written).
- Salutation: **Include** (usually informal, like "Dear [Name]," or "Hello [Name]").
- Body: **Include** (the main content; can be informal and personal).
- Closing: **Include** (informal, like "Best wishes," or "Love,").
- Signature: **Include** (your name or nickname).
- Postscript: **Optional** (can add a personal touch or extra information).

2. Complaint Letter

- Date: **Include** (to document when the complaint was made).
- Salutation: **Include** (formal, like "Dear [Name/Title]," or "To Whom It May Concern").
- Body: **Include** (clearly state the issue, your dissatisfaction, and expected resolution).
- Closing: **Include** (formal, like "Sincerely," or "Regards,").
- Signature: **Include** (your full name).
- Postscript: **Omit** (a complaint letter should be concise and to-the-point).

3. Request Letter

- Date: **Include** (especially important for time-sensitive requests).
- Salutation: **Include** (formal or semi-formal, depending on the recipient).
- Body: **Include** (clearly state the request and the reason for it).
- Closing: **Include** (polite and formal, like "Thank you," or "Best regards,").
- Signature: **Include** (your full name).
- Postscript: **Omit** (keep these letters as concise and to-the-point as possible).

4. Business Letter

- Date: **Include** (crucial for record-keeping).
- Salutation: **Include** (formal, like "Dear [Name/Title]," or "Dear Sir/Madam,").
- Body: **Include** (clear, concise, and to the point).
- Closing: **Include** (formal, like "Sincerely," or "Respectfully,").
- Signature: **Include** (your full name and title).

- Postscript: **Omit** (business letters are typically formal and direct).

5. Cover Letter

- Date: **Include** (shows when the letter was sent).
- Salutation: **Include** (formal, directed to the hiring manager or relevant person).
- Body: **Include** (introduce yourself, explain your interest and suitability for the role).
- Closing: **Include** (formal and polite, like "Sincerely," or "Best regards,").
- Signature: **Include** (your full name).
- Postscript: **Omit** (these letters should be very straightforward and say what you need to say in the body of the letter).

Quick Check

REVIEW THE LETTER ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE AND IDENTIFY EACH OF THE KEY ELEMENTS THAT APPEAR IN THE LETTER ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Example Letter

October 15, 2023

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. It's been quite a while since we last had a chance to catch up, and I've missed your company.

In the past few months, I've been keeping busy with my new job as a park ranger at Greenwood National Park. The natural beauty here is breathtaking, and I often find myself thinking back to the outdoor adventures we used to go on together.

I recently stumbled upon an old photograph of us during our camping trip to Willow Lake. The memories of that trip still bring a smile to my face, and I wanted to share this photo with you as a token of our cherished friendship.

I hope we can plan a reunion soon and relive those wonderful moments. Until then, please take care and know that you're always in my thoughts.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Sawyer

P.S. I've enclosed the photograph I mentioned. I hope it brings back fond memories!