

## Letter writing

### Reason to write

To introduce yourself, to ask a question or for an opinion, to give information or advice, to change other people's opinions, to complain about something or ask for action. The letter on this page is to introduce the importance of writing.

### Situation

Letters are used in a wide range of situations:

- formal (a letter to an organization, a professor or someone you do not know)
- informal (letter to a friend or family member)
- for business (a letter to a company)
- for the public (a letter to be published in a newspaper) or
- for private reasons

In each situation, you have to think about how to structure your letter and how formal you should be. The letter on this page is more formal and is structured to give a background and then advice on writing.

### Text:

#### 1. Organization

- Start Dear...
- Organize into clear indented paragraphs
- First paragraph: say why you are writing
- Final paragraph: summarize your message – what do you want the reader to do or think?
- Finish Yours sincerely,/Regards,
- Sign it at the end

#### 2. Grammar

- Write in the *present tense* "I *am* sure.... There *are* some things to remember." or the *present continuous tense* "I *am writing* this letter..."
- But use the past tense when writing about the past "In high school, many of you probably *wrote* in English"

#### 3. Vocabulary

- There are many set phrases for writing letters, for example "I am writing this letter to..." Learn them and use them.

### **Example 1: Writing in English**

Dear student,

Welcome to university and the Intensive English A content course! I am writing this letter to explain to you why writing is such an important skill in English.

In high school, many of you probably wrote in English when you took notes in class or when you needed to do a grammar exercise. Some of you may have written short essays to help you practice English, but how many of you wrote in English to communicate with someone?

Everyday, I am sure many of you write Line (or other SNS app) messages to friends and family. Perhaps you also write e-mails as well. Maybe you write stories or keep a diary. These are to communicate with people – tell them what you are doing or what you are thinking.

Writing in English at university is the same, but this time you are writing for your classmates or your teachers. You might write an e-mail to your teacher to say you are sick so you can't come to class or to your host family when you study abroad. You will definitely write lots of essays for class for a wide range of reasons, so writing in English is important!

There are some simple things to remember. First, always think about why you are writing: who are you writing to and what are you trying to say? Second, plan your ideas so that the writing is easy to understand. Finally, check your writing for simple mistakes and, if you can, get a friend to read it too and tell you what they think.

What makes good writing in English? For a start, writing that has a clear goal (for example, it answers the essay question clearly), has a clear structure (with paragraphs to help the reader understand), is in the right format (a Line conversation with a friend and a formal essay for a class will look very different), and is written using the right tone and language (essays and e-mails use different language and vocabulary.)

You will have many chances to improve your writing. Ask questions, review your work and remember – writing is always communicating, so who are you writing to and what are you trying to say? Keep focused, and you will do well.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Claflin

(379 words)

**Step 1: Format and some useful phrases in letter writing.**

Here are two very basic letters to show you the different parts of a letter:

**Formal version (which, in this format, would be typed):**

Dear Ms. Kinoshita, 1

I am writing to you to ask if you would like to join our club. 2

Our club has more than one hundred members and has been active since 1973. It is very enjoyable and I am sure you will find it entertaining. 3

I'm looking forward to hearing from you soon. 4

Yours sincerely, 5

Mitsuko Tanaka

Mitsuko Tanaka 6

**Informal version (which would probably be hand written):**

Dear Yuki, 1

Hey! How are you? Just wanted to ask a quick question about club. Do you want to join mine? 2

The club has more than one hundred members and has been around since 1973. I love it and I am sure you will find it a lot of fun. 3

Hope to hear from you soon! 4

Your friend, 5

Mitsuko

*(Note: the formal version has a format you would find in business with spaces between paragraphs. The informal one's paragraphs are indented (which means they have a space before the sentence starts at the beginning of each paragraph) with no spaces between paragraphs.)*

**Sections:** 1 = salutation (like saying hello.) Note: there is a comma “,” at the end.

2 = introduction and statement of purpose of letter (simple greetings, or an opening sentence, which tells the reader why they are getting the letter)

3 = body of letter (where the main idea is – usually this is more than one paragraph)

4 = summing up and polite ending or closing sentence (finishing up, if possible on a positive note, with some idea of what action is expected)

5 = closing (saying bye) and 6 = printed name (with signature above it usually)

## Useful phrases or vocabulary for each section

### 1. *Salutation*

#### **Formal/business**

Dear Sir or Madam,

To Whom It May Concern,

Dear Mr / Mrs / Ms Tanaka,

#### **Informal**

Dearest ....., / Dear ...,

Hi ...,

(just name)

### 2. *Introduction and statement of purpose of letter*

#### **Formal/business**

I am writing to you to enquire....

(enquire=ask)

I am writing to you to request....

(request=ask for...)

I am writing to you to ask for information

about... (looking for information)

#### **Informal**

Great to hear from you!

How have you been?

Thanks for the letter.

Thanks for your help last week.

### 3. *Body of the letter (for formal only)*

**Formal/business:** *To begin requests:* Please.../ I would appreciate it if... / Would you mind....

*Ways of raising an issue or topic* - I'd like to draw your attention to the fact that... / It has come to my attention that... / I am writing to you to complain about...

*Giving advice* - I suggest you.../ Might I suggest that you

*Giving bad news* - Unfortunately... / I am afraid that... / I regret to inform you that...

*Official* - According to our records... / We are aware of the fact that...

### 4. *Summing up and polite ending*

**Formal/business:** *At the end of a first letter to a person or company:* Thank you for your time and attention. / I am looking forward to hearing from you soon. / I hope you can help me in this matter. / I would appreciate your help in this matter.

*At the end of a reply:* Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require further help in this matter. / Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have further enquiries.

**Informal:** Hope all is well. / Take care. / Say hi to... / Hope to hear from you soon. / Hope to see you soon. / All the best.

### 5 - *Closing*

**Formal/business to.....informal.**

Yours sincerely, / Yours faithfully, / Regards, / Warm regards, / Your friend, / Love,

### 6 – *printed name and/or signature*

Note the difference between the formal letter and the informal letter on the other page. Most people sign in cursive writing and it might be hard to read their name in their signature.