

# Lesson 11: Letters and E-Mails – Part 1

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In this lesson, you'll learn a simple 3-part structure to use in any business letter or e-mail. Before we begin, I want to remind you of two important characteristics of business communication:



## Business letters and e-mails are...

- **Polite.** This means they use slightly more formal/professional English. Do not use slang. Phrasal verbs and idioms are OK only in e-mails to business associates who you know well and have a friendly relationship with. You'll learn some useful formal English phrases in this lesson.
- **Concise.** This means they focus on the essential information and they don't include lots of extra details or long explanations that are not very relevant to the letter's purpose.

If you need to write a letter or e-mail, you can follow this structure:

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- Salutation to open the letter
- Reference to any recent contact
- Expresses your reason for writing

### 2. DETAILS - more information that is relevant to the letter's purpose.

- Good / bad news
- Requests / offers
- Complaints
- Brief explanations

### 3. CONCLUSION

- Next action
- Deadlines or time limits

- Contact information (if necessary)
- Closing

Let's look at each part in more detail and learn some specific phrases to use.

**Note:** In some of the example phrases, the words "I" and "me" are used. In others, the words "we" and "us" are used. You should use "I" (first person singular) if you are writing the letter representing yourself, and "we" (first person plural) if you are writing the letter representing a group or company.

## Introduction

### Salutation

To open the letter, write "Dear" followed by:

- **Mr.** (for a man)
- **Mrs.** (for a married woman)
- **Miss** (for a single woman)
- **Ms.** (for a woman when you don't know if she's married or single)

...and then the person's last name. For example:

- **Dear Mr. Smith,**
- **Dear Ms. Jones,**

If the person has a special title, you can use that instead of "Mr." or "Ms.":

- **Dear Dr. Meyers,**  
*(Dr. is short for Doctor)*
- **Dear Professor Davis,**
- **Dear Rev. Finch,**  
*(Rev. is short for Reverend - a Christian religious leader)*
- **Dear Pastor Anderson,**

E-mails are a little less formal than letters, so when writing to a contact with whom you frequently exchange messages, you can use this form (instead of "Dear"):

- **Hello / Hi (first name),**

## **Referencing Recent Contact**

If you have recently had contact with the person you're writing to, you can use one of these phrases:

- Thank you for your message/letter/interest/inquiry.  
*("inquiry" means the person asked a question)*
- This is in response to your request...
- Regarding our telephone conversation yesterday...
- It was a pleasure meeting you at the conference.
- I enjoyed having lunch with you last week.

## **Reason for Writing**

The final part of the introduction is the reason for writing. You can say:

I am writing...

- **to inform you that...**  
[your order was shipped on July 27.]
- **to tell you about...**  
[a new product that may be beneficial to your company.]
- **to confirm...**  
[your attendance at the international training conference.]
- **to request...**  
[information about your services.]
- **to inquire about...**  
[opportunities for partnership between our companies.]
- **to express my dissatisfaction with...**  
[the delay in receiving the material I purchased.]

## Details

Now let's move on to the "details" part of the letter or e-mail.

### Giving Good News

When giving good news, it's common to use the words "pleased" and "delighted" - both of which mean "happy."

- **We are pleased to announce that...**  
[our company has agreed to sponsor your event].
- **I am delighted to inform you that...**  
[you have been accepted into New York University's MBA program.]
- **You will be pleased to learn that...**  
[we are sending you a complimentary (*free*) sample of our product.]

### Giving Bad News

When giving bad news, it's common to express that you are sorry about the bad news - with phrases like these.

- **I regret to inform you that...**  
[your order has been delayed approximately two weeks.]
- **I'm afraid...**  
[it will not be possible to customize the software for your company.]
- **Unfortunately we are unable to...**  
[ship products to Japan due to high import taxes.]
- **After careful consideration, we have decided...**  
[to work with a different provider for our materials.]

### Requests, Offers, and Additional Information

If you need to make a request, use these phrases:

- **I would like to know...**  
[if discount pricing is available.]

- **I would appreciate it if you could...**  
[send me the reports.]

To offer to do something for the other person, use these phrases:

- **Would you like us to...?**  
[design the artwork for the magazine cover?]
- **I would be happy to...**  
[meet you at the airport when you arrive.]
- **We are quite willing to...**  
[discuss alternatives to the current agreement.]

Sometimes you include additional information in the envelope along with your letter. To call attention to this extra information, you can say:

- **Please refer to / see / review the enclosed information.** (in physical letters)
- **Please refer to / see / review the attached information.** (in e-mails)

## Conclusion

### Next Action

In the conclusion, tell the person the next action that you want them to take:

- **Please advise as necessary.**  
*(= send me your opinion)*
- **I'd appreciate your immediate attention to this matter.**  
*(= act now, the situation is urgent)*
- **I look forward to your reply.**  
**I look forward to hearing from you.**  
*(= I'm waiting for you to contact me.)*

If there is no next action, or if you already stated it earlier in the letter, then you can restate the letter's purpose beginning with the phrase "Again" or "Once again":

- **Once again, I apologize for the inconvenience.**
- **Again, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the partnership.**

If necessary, you can give contact information if the person might have questions or need help:

- **If you require any further information, please call us at 1-800-555-1212.**
- **If you require assistance, please contact our technical support.**  
*("require" is a formal word for "need")*

## **Closing**

To finish your letter or e-mail, use a closing, followed by a comma and by your name.

### **More formal closings:**

- Sincerely,
- Regards,
- Respectfully yours,

### **More "personal" closings / E-mail closings:**

- Warm regards,
- Best wishes,
- Cordially,
- Many thanks,
- With appreciation,

This second group of closings is good to use if you already have a business or social relationship with the person. They are also good for e-mails, which are often less formal than letters.

Do not use "Love," or "With hugs/kisses" – these are not appropriate for business. They are only for family and close friends.