

## Writing a Letter

### I. What is a letter ?

A letter is a mean of communication in both the workspace and the personal life. It is the act of handwriting a message on a piece of paper. It is a written message that can be handwritten or printed on paper. It is usually sent to the recipient via mail or post in an envelope. Letter writing is divided into two categories: personal letters (exchanged between family members, friends, or lovers) and business letters (used in formal, nonverbal correspondence with colleagues and associates).

### II. Types of letters :

#### a. Formal Letters:

These letters follow a certain pattern and formality. They are strictly kept professional in nature, and directly address the issues concerned. Any type of business letter or letter to authorities falls within this given category.

#### b. Informal Letters:

These are personal letters. They need not follow any set pattern or adhere to any formalities. They contain personal information or are a written conversation. Informal letters are generally written to friends, acquaintances, relatives etc.

#### c. Business Letters:

This letter is written among business correspondents, generally contains commercial information such as quotations, orders, complaints, claims, letters for collections etc. Such letters are always strictly formal and follow a structure and pattern of formalities.

#### d. Official Letters:

This type of letter is written to inform offices, branches, subordinates of official information. It usually relays official information like rules, regulations, procedures, events, or any other such information. Official letters are also formal in nature and follow certain structure and decorum.

#### e. Social Letters:

A personal letter written on the occasion of a special event is known as a social letter. Congratulatory letter, condolence letter, invitation letter etc are all social letters.

#### f. Employment Letters:

Any letters with respect to the employment process, like joining letter, promotion letter, application letter etc.

### III. Rules for all letters :

There are some rules to applied to all types of lectures. Those rules were published by Junior Certificate School Programme Support Service in 2006. The rules are the following:

- It is important that your handwriting be neat and clear.
- The writer's address is written in the top right-hand corner.
- Leave a space between the address and date.
- Spell out the month in full, e.g. 15th February 2006
- Begin the letter "Dear" . . . . , on the left-hand side.
- The first paragraph of the letter begins under the person's name.
- A formal letter usually ends with either: Yours sincerely, or Yours faithfully,
- Followed by your signature. (Note: 'Yours', always begins with a capital letter, but 'sincerely' and 'faithfully' begin with a small letter.
- Always use plain unlined paper and the same colour envelopes.
- A large size writing pad is best for most letters.
- Write your letter in blue or black pen only.

- Revise the rules for using capital letters.
- Always use paragraphs when writing a letter.
- All of these rules are shown on the sample layout on the next page.

#### IV. Formal letters

Formal letters are business like and get quickly to the point. Formal letters are different to personal letters. You do not write in a chatty manner or use slang. For example, you would write a different letter to your Principal inviting him to your class JCSP graduation as you would to your friend. Formal letters are usually written for some of the following:

- To apply for a job.
- To make a complaint.
- To order goods.
- To the editor of a newspaper.
- To ask for something – a form, an appointment.
- To ask for information.
- To make a booking for a holiday etc.
- To invite someone to an event or to visit such as a school open day or a JCSP celebration.

#### ➤ Points to note:

- The sender's address (your address), is on the top right hand corner.
- The address of the company/person to whom the letter is being sent is written on the left-hand side.
- When you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing, you may start with 'Dear Sir/Madam'.
- If you begin with 'Dear Sir/Madam', you end the letter with 'Yours faithfully', and your full name.
- If you know the name of the person you are sending the letter to e.g. Dear Ms Smith, you end the letter with 'Yours sincerely' and your full name.
- Remember to use capital letters, full stops and commas.
- Use paragraphs in your letter – at least 3.



#### V. Kinds of formal Letter

- a. Letter of Enquiry
- b. Order Letter
- c. Letter of Complaint
- d. Reply to a Letter of Complaint
- e. Promotion Letter
- f. Sales Letters
- g. Recovery Letters
- h. Business Letter

#### VI. How to write a letter ?

1. Identify the type of letter.
2. Make sure you open and close the letter correctly.
3. Write your address and today's date at the top of the page.
4. Write the name and address of the recipient.
5. Write the salutation.
6. Write the letter.
7. Use a complimentary close.
8. Fold the letter (optional).
9. Write your return address on the envelope (optional).

**Activity:**

- Write an application letter for the Role of “Sales Manager” at XX Company.

**Reference:**

Junior Certificate School Programme Support Service. (2006). *Letter Writing*

**Useful links:**

<https://www.fcusd.org/cms/lib/CA01001934/Centricity/Domain/1250/Formal%20Letter%20Writing%20Workshop.pdf>

[https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/7590\\_Letter\\_Writing\\_Book.pdf](https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/7590_Letter_Writing_Book.pdf)