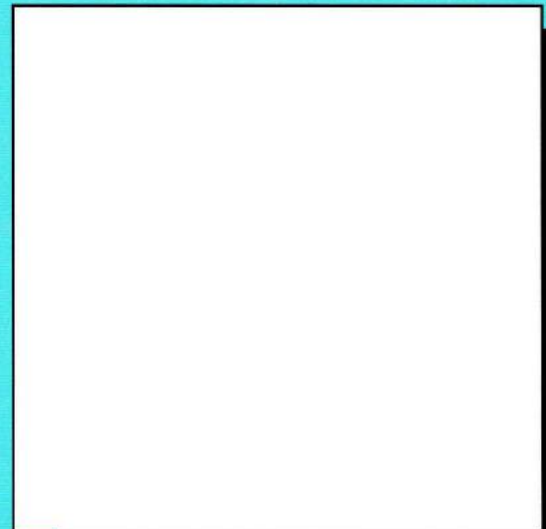
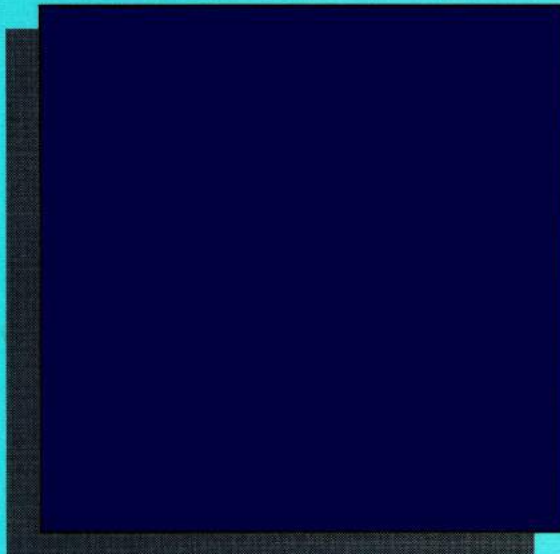
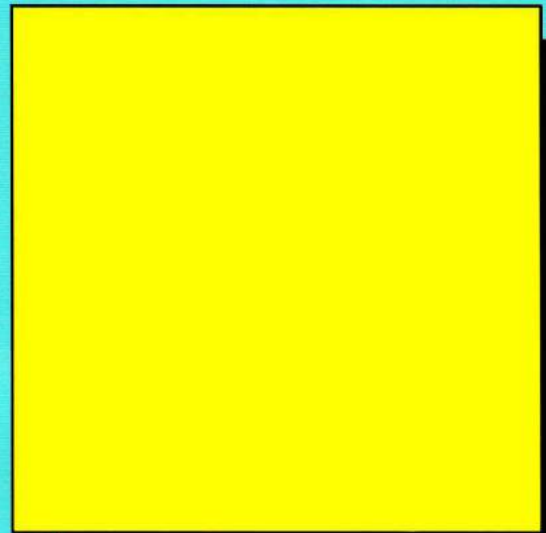
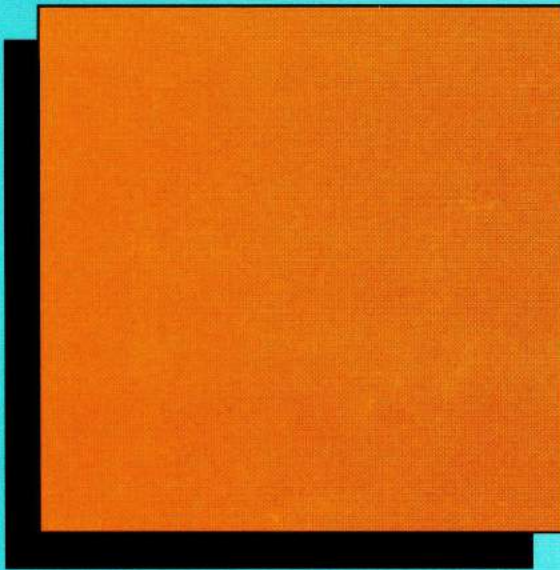


Letter Writing in English

RATIONALE AND MODELS
FOR SOCIAL AND BUSINESS LETTERS



Letter Writing in English

RATIONALE AND MODELS
FOR SOCIAL AND BUSINESS LETTERS

Prepared by
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Washington, D.C. 20547

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Letter Writing in English

Rationale

Writing skills are often the most difficult skills for students of English as a foreign language to acquire. This may be because of the great emphasis on listening, speaking, and reading in the classroom. Or it may be that their teachers have not had special training in this area and feel unsure of their own writing competence. (This is true of native-speaking as well as non-native-speaking teachers of English.) Whatever the case, it is certainly true that guided writing practice in the early stages of English instruction will help to (1) reinforce and integrate the development of all the language skills and (2) prepare learners for the production of written English at more advanced levels.

While there are important differences between spoken and written English—for example, spoken English has more shortened forms, contractions, omissions, and colloquial expressions—these differences need not intimidate the learner at the intermediate level, nor prevent the teacher from introducing real writing practice at this stage. And *real* writing, that is, practicing realistic use of the language (in its simpler written forms), is possible at this stage if the teacher provides good models and useful vocabulary for life-like situations. Writing directions, taking down simple telephone messages, making shopping lists are some examples of simple writing tasks in which the students can actually practice writing English in everyday functions. Letter writing, with its many forms and uses, is another activity that is particularly advantageous for the following reasons:

- The vocabulary and structures in the letter may be taken from the students' own learned material.
- The letters may be short and simple in form and style, gradually increasing in length and complexity as the students progress.
- The letter writing assignments may vary according to type and style as selected by the teacher and the students.
- The letters may be corrected and kept in the students' notebooks for actual use as models later on.

In addition to these reasons for practicing letter writing early in the English language training, there is another even more pedagogically important reason to consider. Letters that are well-organized in form and content generally follow a pattern that is similar to basic composition writing. A well-composed letter, like a good composition in English, usually has three basic components:


1. A salutation, corresponding to the introduction;
2. A general message, corresponding to the body; and
3. A closing and signature, corresponding to the conclusion of the composition.

We see, then, that letter writing can be an effective means of introducing and reinforcing the principles of good composition in English; the writer in both cases must first organize his or her thoughts logically to convey the intended message.

General Format

Let's categorize the kinds of letters our students are most likely to encounter into two simple groups: social letters and business letters. For both types, indeed for almost any letter written in English, there is a general layout or format that is followed and several general components that are required. The following model sets out (1) the writer's address, (2) the salutation to the addressee, (3) the body of message, (4) the closing word or phrase, and (5) the writer's signature.

MODEL LETTER

	writer's city/state/zip code writer's country month/day/year
salutation (<i>Dear</i>) + addressee's name,	
body of the letter	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
	closing,  (writer's name)

Note: Readers in American English usually expect to find these parts of a letter arranged in this way; they may be confused if the format is changed. In some countries, for instance, the custom is to include the writer's name in the upper right-hand corner above the writer's address. However, a reader accustomed to American English letters may think that the (foreign) writer's name is a street, if it is written on the first line of the address position.

Writer's Address

Although you will usually find that the writer places his/her address in the upper right-hand corner of the page, business correspondents may place their address in the letterhead at the middle top of the page, or at the lower left-hand corner.

Envelope Address

On the envelope, the U.S. post office requires the addressee's name on the first line, the street address on the second line, the city/state/zip code on the third line, and the name of the country on the last line. All of this should appear in the center of the envelope. The writer's name and address should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope.

MODEL ENVELOPE

writer's full name	STAMP
writer's street address	
writer's city/state/zip code	
writer's country	
(title) addressee's full name	
addressee's street address	
addressee's city/state/zip code	
addressee's country	

Salutation

Salutations are placed on the left margin. As a general rule, when the writer knows the addressee well and is on a “first name” basis (that is, if they call each other by first name informally), the writer begins an informal social letter with *Dear* followed by the addressee’s first or given name:

Example: *Dear John*, *Dear Mary*, etc.

For formal social letters and business letters, however, the salutation *Dear* is followed by the addressee’s title and family name:

Example: *Dear Mr. Smithson*, *Dear Dr. Jones*, etc.

In business letter salutations, the reader may also note other forms: for example, *Dear Publisher*, *Dear Editor*, *Dear Reader*, *Dear Parents*, *Dear Colleague*, etc. This avoids the use of *Dear Sir* and *Gentlemen*, which are now outdated as they assume all readers are male, and overlook the growing number of women in the business world today.

In business letters, the reader may also note the use of *Ms.*, which is the exact linguistic equivalent of *Mr.*; that is, *Ms.* indicates female gender but not whether the person is married. Some women still prefer to use *Miss* (unmarried) or *Mrs.* (married), but most business correspondence today uses *Ms.*, unless it uses some form indicating the position or office for whom the letter is intended. (See the illustrations.)

Body of the Letter

The letter itself may also begin exactly on the left margin, directly under the salutation, or it may be indented five spaces to the right, the traditional signal for a new paragraph in English. If you prefer not to indent for each new paragraph, you should leave an extra space between paragraphs.

Although we are mainly concerned with format here, it will be well to keep in mind that the body of the letter contains the main message or “point.” Culturally speaking, a native English language reader usually expects the writer of formal or business letters to (1) introduce him/herself, (2) state the purpose of the letter, and (3) conclude the letter. Note that the conclusion often may be a simple “thank you” for the reader’s attention.

Closing Signature

The closing and signature at the end of the letter are usually spaced from the right margin and aligned under the address and date that appear in the upper right-hand corner. (See the illustrations.) If there is any possibility that the person receiving your letter may not be able to read your signature (because of a difference of handwriting styles), you should carefully print or type your name under your handwritten signature. Remember that when the reader answers your letter and addresses the envelope, he/she must be able to spell your name clearly and correctly. Your letter is the only guideline to spelling your name and address correctly.

Impact on the Reader

In summary, a good letter must be clearly thought out, and clearly organized on paper. Its message should be understandable to the reader and its appearance on the page should be well-balanced, like a picture in a frame. A letter, remember, carries the writer's unspoken thoughts and silently reflects the writer's personality. Each letter is a personally creative act of real communication.

SOCIAL LETTERS

APOLOGY (formal)

555 Rosamond Street
Greenville, MA 22222
September 15, 1988

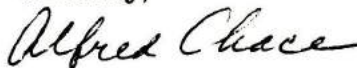
Dear Mr. Smith:

I want to apologize for not having answered your very kind letter sooner, but I have been away on a trip and just returned today.

The photographs you sent are beautiful. My family and I appreciate them very much. They are the best kind of remembrance, and we are very grateful.

Again, please accept my apologies for the delay. And please give my best regards to your family.

Sincerely,



Your student,
Alfred Chace

APOLOGY (informal)

September 15, 1988

Dear George,

I'm writing to tell you that I've lost your copy of "Gone with the Wind." I left it in the lounge, and someone must have picked it up. I'm really very sorry, and will try to replace it as soon as I can.

Regards,



CONDOLENCES death in the family (formal)

900 Chesapeake Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20010
September 15, 1988

Dear Mr. Duval:

I was saddened to hear the news. Please accept my deepest sympathy in your time of sorrow.

Your Neighbor,
Catherine S. Black
Catherine S. Black

CONDOLENCES death in the family (informal)

September 15, 1988

Dear Florence,

We're sorry to hear about your grandfather. We all share your sadness. He was a wonderful man and we shall all miss him very much.

Please call us if we can help in any way.

In sympathy,

Cathy

CONDOLENCES on an illness (formal)

211 Oak Ridge Park
Youngtown, OH 33333
September 15, 1988

Dear Ms. Rogers,

We were sorry to hear about your illness and hope that you recover soon.
With best wishes for a speedy recovery,

Your English class,
(by) Henry Moore
(by Henry Moore)

CONDOLENCES on an illness (informal)

June 1, 1988

Dear Rick,

We were sorry to hear about your illness, and hope that you'll be up and around soon. We miss you!

Get well soon,
Jenny and Paul
Jenny and Paul

CONGRATULATIONS on the birth of a baby (formal)

West 12 Main Street
Howard, CA 88888
September 15, 1988

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Miller,

Congratulations on the birth of your daughter Melissa. May you enjoy all the blessings of parenthood.

With very best wishes,

Sincerely,



David R. Johnson

CONGRATULATIONS on the birth of a baby (informal)

4246 38th Street, N.E.
St. Louis, MO, 44444
September 15, 1988

Dear Martha and Tom,

What wonderful news! I was delighted to hear about the baby and that you all are doing well. I want to congratulate both of you on the arrival of Melissa and wish you many years of happy parenting!

Love,



CONGRATULATIONS on graduation (formal)

25 First Avenue West
Norfolk, VA 66666
September 15, 1988

Dear Dr. Harrision:

Congratulations on the completion of your doctoral degree.

May I wish you every success in your new career.

Sincerely,

Edmund J. Hill
Director, Language Center


CONGRATULATIONS on a new job (informal)

Fairwoods Apartments #42
100 Broad Avenue S.E.
Tulsa, OK 77777
September 15, 1988

Dear Joe,

Congratulations on your new job! We were all really happy to hear the good news and wish you the best of luck.

Let us know how you're getting along—and when you're coming through Tulsa again. Soon, we hope!

As ever, 

CONGRATULATIONS on a birthday (informal)

September 15, 1988

Dear Kathleen,

Happy Birthday, and many happy returns of the day!

Love,

Mary

CONGRATULATIONS on a fiftieth wedding anniversary (formal)

Route 4, Box 200
Blackthorn, KY 55555
September 15, 1988

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Brock,

Congratulations on your golden wedding anniversary! Although we can't be with you to help you celebrate this very special occasion, please know that we are with you in spirit on this happy and auspicious day.

With warmest best wishes.

Sincerely,

Mary and John Smith

Mary and John Smith

INVITATION (informal)

*P.O. Box 7
Golden Sands, FL 44444
June 1, 1988*

Dear Prof. and Mrs. Miller,

My family and I would like to invite you to spend the Fourth of July holiday at our summer house on the ocean. Our house is near the beach and you will be free to swim and walk along the shore to your heart's content.

We will meet you at the airport and take care of all your transportation. We are looking forward to seeing you and do hope that you can come.

*Cordially,
Mary Margaret Nelson
Mary Margaret Nelson*

INVITATION (informal)

September 15, 1988

Dear Paul,

We're having a Fourth of July get-together at our summer house. Bring your beach clothes and a good appetite and plan to spend the weekend!

P.S. We'll pick you up at the airport, of course!

Doug

INVITATION (informal)

October 4, 1988

Dear Jerry & Carol,

You are cordially invited to come to our annual Halloween costume party on Monday, October 31, 1988 at our home. We promise surprises, fun costumes, and good food. Bring a friend!

Looking forward to seeing you!

The Thompsons

*RSVP regrets only
555-2367*

THANK YOU "bread and butter letter"

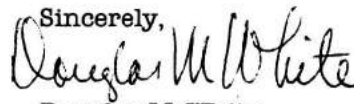
Toledo Park Hotel
Cincinnati, OH 22222
September 15, 1988

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Williams,

Thank you again for the wonderful weekend! I had such a good time visiting you and your family, and I enjoyed meeting all your relatives. I shall never forget the warm hospitality.

I hope that someday you are able to visit me and my family. I would like to return your kindness and hospitality, and to show you around my hometown.

Please give my respects to all your family.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. White

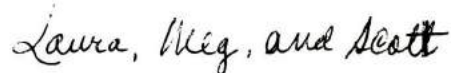
THANK YOU "bread-and-butter letter"

September 15, 1988

Dear Edith,

Thanks again for a wonderful weekend! The children and I really enjoyed our visit. We think you're the perfect hostess!

Please come visit us in Chicago. We'd all love to have you stay for Thanksgiving.

Love,


THANK YOU for a gift (formal)

Broad Branch Road 12 A
Littleton, NJ 33333
September 15, 1988

Dear Dr. Malone,

My sister and I want to thank you for the wonderful books which just arrived. They will be extremely useful in our courses this next semester. We deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness.

With very best regards,

Sincerely,

Agnes Howe
Irene Howe
Agnes and Irene Howe

THANK YOU for a gift (informal)

9/15/88

Dear Ruth,

Thanks so much for the birthday book. It's just what I need!

Love,

Agnes

BUSINESS LETTERS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT (receipt of contract)

9/15/88


ABC Corporation
123 Long Street
Bigtown, CA 88888

Dear Director:

This is to acknowledge receipt of the housing contract that I requested.

Thank you for your promptness.

Yours truly,



Thomas R. Hood

Thomas R. Hood Associates
Fourth and Pine Streets
Los Angeles, CA 88888

ACKNOWLEDGMENT (receipt of package)

9/15/88

Prof. Louis Green
Dept. of English
Idaho State College
Boise, ID 99999

Dear Prof. Green:

Thank you for sending the book parcel. It arrived safely and is in good condition.

We appreciate your care and consideration and look forward to hearing from you again.



A.B. Springer

A.B. Springer
Rockway Apartments
Northtown, MI 22222

APPLICATION (computer course)

9/15/88

Easy Correspondence Courses, Inc.
90 East Main Street
Littletown, SC 77777

Dear Director:

Enclosed please find my application form for your course in Computer Language II, with a personal check for one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00). Please advise if this amount is not correct.

Thank you.

Joseph Browning
Joseph Browning

Joseph Browning
1717 Tenth Avenue
Black Rock, AR 22222

APPLICATION (job)

930 Lewis Street,
Chicago, IL 60609

September 15, 1988

Data Control International
111 Morris Lane
Kankakee, IL 60620

Dear Ms. Boswell:

I would like to apply for the position of assistant computer programmer as advertised in the September 14, 1988 *Chicago Daily News*. I feel that I am especially qualified, and would appreciate your sending me an application form.

Please send the application to the address above. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Maxell Taylor

APPLICATION (university)

9/15/88

Dept. of Classical Languages
Learn Fast Open University
300 North Boulevard
Greenville, ND 44444

Dear Director:

Please send me a brochure on your open university and an application form.
I want to learn Latin.

Thanking you in advance,

Florence Jones
Florence Jones

Mailing address:
Ms. Florence Jones
41 Rose Street
Grange, ND 44444

APPLICATION (university)

Sept. 15, 1988

Registrar's Office
State University
Littleton, SD 55555

Dear Registrar:

I am a student of microbiology in Geneva, Switzerland. I would like to apply for entrance to your university. Would you please send me an application form and information on your university.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Renee Martin
Renee Martin

Blanc Apt. 406
Geneva, Switzerland

COMPLAINTS (damage in shipment)

9/15/88

**Great Falls Manufacturing Co.
100 Main Street
Great Falls, MO 88888**

Attention: Domestic Shipping Dept.

This is to register a complaint about the shipment of pottery (invoice # 33355999) that I received today. Several pieces were broken, and others were chipped. I am returning the entire shipment air freight. Please send a replacement order packed in styrofoam.

I will appreciate your prompt attention.

E.J. Fields
E.J. Fields

**Fields Arts and Crafts
20 Drury Lane
Boston, MA 33333**

COMPLAINTS (error in printing)

Sept. 15, 1988

Highways, Incorporated
222 Broadway
New York, NY 10000

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to call your attention to an oversight in your spring advertisement on overseas travel. You have totally overlooked the entire Mediterranean region.

Hoping to receive a corrected brochure at your earliest convenience,

Yours truly,
Helen McKay
Helen McKay

Ms. Helen McKay
Hot Springs Hotel
Hot Springs, AR 22222

COMPLAINTS (delay in response)

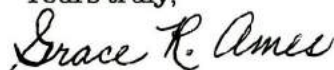
9/15/88

Horizons Books, Inc.
55 Canal Street
Chicago, IL 44444

Attention: Orders Dept.

Would you please check on our order for one copy of *World Problems*, by John Doe, Universal Press, 1987, which we sent to you on September 1, 1988 with a check for \$25.00 (twenty five dollars) enclosed for cost and shipping. If you did not receive the order, or if you are out of stock, please advise.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Grace R. Ames".

Grace R. Ames,
Librarian

Central Library
Green River, MA 11111

INVITATION (conference)

September 15, 1988

*Dr. Barbara Phillips, Chairperson
Department of English
University of Farmington
Farmington, OH 55555*

Dear Dr. Phillips:

We are honored to invite you to participate in our forthcoming conference on old Gaelic phonology to be held October 7-10 in New York City College's School of Linguistics. The enclosed brochure will give details on papers, speakers, and deadlines for abstracts.

We look forward to your acceptance.

Very truly yours,

ML Bentley
Magda L. Bentley,
Chairperson

*Prof. Magda L. Bentley
School of Linguistics
New York City College
New York, NY 10000*

INVITATION (reception)

Robert Peterson
113 Parklane Drive
Williston, FL 66666

Dear Mr. Peterson:

We are pleased to invite you to a reception on September 28, 1988 to be held in honor of Prof. Marilyn Gomez, the newest member of the faculty in the Department of Electrical Engineering. Prof. Gomez will be meeting members of our department for the first time, and we would like to welcome her officially on our staff.

A light lunch buffet will be served before the ceremony in the Johnson Room of the Administration Building at 12:00 noon. Please plan to attend.

James Kendrick, Chairman
Dept. of Electrical Engineering

RSVP by Sept. 21
555-2343

ORDERS (book purchase)

XYZ Book Company
Sunrise Boulevard
Riverton, MI 44444

9/15/88

Purchasing Department:

I would like to order the following books in cloth or hardback:

- 1) *Changing Times* by Ralph Wright, United Press, 1980, one copy.
- 2) *Music for Millions* by Nellie Blum, Great Books Co., 1955, three copies.
- 3) *General Geology* by Harwood and Brown, Scott Book Co., 1984, one copy.

Would you please send me the list prices and shipping costs as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Sue Ellen Appleton
Sue Ellen Appleton

Mailing address:
87 Broad Street North
Dry Gulch, NM 55555

ORDERS (book purchase)

Blackstone Book Agency
Sixth and Riverside Avenue
Olympia, WA 99999

September 15, 1988

Attention: Ms. R. J. Smith

Dear Ms. Smith:

Would you please send me a copy of *World Wide Dictionary*, unabridged second edition, 1982. I am enclosing a money order for \$37.50 to cover cost and handling. If this amount is not correct, please let me know.

Thanking you in advance,

Yours truly,

Josephine Black
Josephine Black
Principal

Dr. Josephine Black, Principal
City College
Mountainview, WA 99999

REQUEST (for catalog)

*Superior Books, Ltd.
55 Second Avenue
Prairie, NE 77777*

9/15/88

Catalog Department:

I would like to request a free catalog on American literature books. Please send it to the address below.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Harry Redding
Harry Redding

*Dr. Harry Redding
Dept. of English
Western College
Lakeview, NM 44444*

REQUEST (for reservation)

*Tiptop Travel, Inc.
Fifth Avenue
Greenburg, VT 11111*

Sept. 15, 1988

Attention: World Travel Reservations

Please reserve one seat on your Around-the World tour leaving Greenburg on March 30, returning May 30. I am enclosing a down payment of \$500.00 (five hundred dollars) by personal check. Please bill me for the remainder.

Alice Adam Harris
(Mrs. J.H. Harris)

Mrs. J.H. Harris

*Mrs. J.H. Harris
Rockford Arms Hotel
Rockford, CO 33333*

POSTCARD GREETINGS

Tampa, Florida

Dear Mary,

I'm having a wonderful time in Tampa. Wish
you were here.

*Love,
Lois*

STAMP

Ms. Mary Smith
10 Main Street
Newark NJ 22222

London

Jack — Greetings from London!
See you next week.

Hal

STAMP

Mr. John Brown
400 12th St.
Los Angeles CA 98000

Hot Springs, Arkansas

Dear Jane,

You must come to Hot Springs—
it's wonderful!
Thinking of you,

Barbara

STAMP

Mrs. J.R. Black
17 Willow Lane
San Antonio, TX 78900

New York City

Dear Anna and Phil,

Greetings from New York—The Big Apple!

Love to all,

the Thompsons

STAMP

Mr. and Mrs. P.W. White
Grand Apts. 501
Northtown, PA 33000

GLOSSARY (terms are defined in the context of letter-writing)

acknowledgment	a statement of recognition (or receipt of a letter) informing the sender that the letter has been received
addressee	the person to whom the letter is addressed (and who will receive the letter)
apology	an admission of error that is also an expression of regret
bread-and-butter letter	a letter of thanks after a visit, special dinner invitation, etc.
condolence	an expression of sympathy or regret over a great loss, death of a friend, etc.
complaint	a statement or expression of dissatisfaction over a purchase, a service, etc.
congratulations	an expression of pleasure and happiness at someone's good fortune or special achievement
distance	degree or amount of separation between two things or people. The greater the "distance," the greater the degree of formality between two persons; age and social status are two factors that determine sociolinguistic "distance."
felicitations	an expression of congratulations and good wishes for someone's happiness
indent (to)	to set in (from the left margin) several spaces, usually five spaces
margin	the part of the page or sheet of paper that is outside the printed body of writing; the edge
register	style level; the linguistic vocabulary and grammar, etc., used in a specific context (e.g., <i>formal</i> register used with officials during a state ceremony, <i>intimate</i> register used with very close family, pets, etc.)
regrets only	on an invitation, responding only if you will not attend
RSVP	<i>repondez s'il vous plait</i> (reply if you please); a reply to the invitation is requested (and necessary)

Zip Code Abbreviations used in the U.S.:

Alabama	AL	Missouri	MO
Alaska	AK	Montana	MT
Arizona	AZ	Nebraska	NE
Arkansas	AR	Nevada	NV
California	CA	New Hampshire	NH
Colorado	CO	New Jersey	NJ
Connecticut	CT	New Mexico	NM
Delaware	DE	New York	NY
District of Columbia	DC	North Carolina	NC
Florida	FL	North Dakota	ND
Georgia	GA	Ohio	OH
Hawaii	HI	Oklahoma	OK
Idaho	ID	Oregon	OR
Illinois	IL	Pennsylvania	PA
Indiana	IN	Rhode Island	RI
Iowa	IO	South Carolina	SC
Kansas	KS	South Dakota	SD
Kentucky	KY	Tennessee	TN
Louisiana	LA	Texas	TX
Maine	ME	Utah	UT
Maryland	MD	Vermont	VT
Massachusetts	MA	Virginia	VA
Michigan	MI	Washington	WA
Minnesota	MN	West Virginia	WV
Mississippi	MS	Wisconsin	WI
		Wyoming	WY

Note: Some new business addresses may now have an additional number following the standard 5-digit zip code number. These numbers should be used on all correspondence.

Examples:

Iowa State University
Ames, IO 50011

...

University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045-2140

...

Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1035

