Business Letter

Business Letters remain one of the top forms of communication in the workplace, and all business professionals are required to have more than a passing knowledge of how to write a business letter. While the purpose of letters will differ, the formatting for every business letter remains the same. In addition to form, courtesy is an expected workplace behavior. Even if you are writing a letter of complaint, do not be rude, sarcastic, or disrespectful.

There are two types of conventional formatting for a letter: Block and Modified Block.

- **Block formatting:** All text is aligned to the left margin. Do not indent new paragraphs but do double space between paragraphs.
- **Modified Block:** Align the address, return address, date, closing, and signature on the right. Indent paragraphs and double space between paragraphs.

Elements of the Business Letter:

1. **Heading:** The heading contains the information of the sender. Most companies have their own letterhead, and in that event, you could center the sender’s information under the company letterhead. The information in a heading should contain the following:
   - Company Name.
   - Company Address (Do not abbreviate street or avenue) Use the US Postal Services two-letter abbreviation for the state.
   - Company Phone.
   - Company Website.
   - Company Fax number.
   - Date (Type the date out in long form: January 1, 2012 or 1 January 2012).

   *Note: If you are using blank paper, you will include your address only: do not put your name in the letterhead. Also, use the letterhead for the first page and do not number. Each consecutive page after page one will be left blank, or you will reference to whom the letter is addressed, page 2, and the date.*

2. **Inside Address:** The inside address will include the company and individual to whom the letter is intended. The required information is as follows:
   - Addressee’s title: Dr., Professor, Honorable, Mr. or Ms. Note Dr. is abbreviated while Professor is written out. Do not abbreviate titles unless they are acceptable abbreviations: Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss or Dr. *When writing correspondences to people in other countries, learn the correct correspondence titles.*
   - Include the full name.
   - Address—complete mailing address, street, city, state, zip code. *Other countries’ addresses may look differently than to what you are accustomed.*

3. **Attention Line:** Use the attention line to route the letter.
   - Use the attention line if you are not certain of the name of the person who holds the position that you are writing to. (You might write: Attention Department of Accounting).
Always make an effort to find out the name of the person to whom you are writing.

4. Subject Line and Reference Line: The subject line is used to identify the purpose of the letter. The Reference line is used to specify a particular correspondence that generated your response.
   - Can be placed above or below the Salutation and usually is begun with Re or RE followed by a colon. Re: or RE: or Reference: or Subject:
   - Project number will be written on the reference line.
   - Allows your correspondence or his or her staff to find the file that the letter is in reference.
   - Using a Reference Line eliminates the clumsy introduction that would, otherwise, need to announce the reason for the letter.
   - If no project number, use a brief phrase to describe what the letter is about or in reference to.

5. Salutation: Gives greeting to the receiver from the sender.
   - The Salutation is placed two lines below the inside address (if there are no subject or reference lines). Otherwise, it is two lines below the last element.
   - Traditional salutation is Dear. Dear is part of a long-standing convention. Do not omit the Dear.
   - The title of the person and name of the person: Dear Dr. Doe: Dear Professor Smith: Dear Mr. Smith:
   - Follow the name with a colon. DO NOT USE A COMMA.

   - At least three paragraphs:
     1. Introductory paragraph provides a brief introduction to you and your subject matter.
     2. Body paragraphs should be written clearly and concisely.
     3. Conclusion provides a request for a reply and a thank you.
   - Whenever possible, if you have multiple items in a series or sentences with multiple clauses or phrases, bullet.

7. Complimentary Closing:
   - Conventional closings:
     1. People you do not know.
       a) Sincerely,
       b) Sincerely yours,
     2. People with whom you have a relationship.
       a) Warm regards,
       b) With best wishes,
   - Capitalize only the first word of the Complimentary closing.
   - Follow the closing with a comma.

8. Writer’s Signature:
   - Sign your name below the Complimentary closing and above your typed name. Use your legal name and write legibly (Sign in ink).

9. Writer’s Typed Name and Title:
   - Type your name four spaces below the Complimentary closing.
   - A woman without a title may include (Mrs. Ms.) in parenthesis to the left of her name.
   - Below the typed name, include your title.
10. Enclosure Notice: This line alerts your reader to enclosed documents.
   - Enclosure: For more than one enclosure, include the number in parenthesis. Do not count the page numbers but the number of documents enclosed.
   - Enclosure: Medical examination form.

11. Distribution Notice: You use a distribution or copy line to inform your reader that you have sent copies to other recipients.
   - Copy: John Smith, Jan Doe, and John Doe.
   - C: John Smith, Jan Doe, and John Doe.

12. Identification of Typist: Use this line if someone typed the letter for you.
   - Usually the writer's initials are upper case and the typist's initials are lower case.
     JIW:mjs.

Note: If the letter contains more than one page, place the following information in the upper left corner: Page 2 and under that the date. You may write above Page 2 Letter to John Doe.