
I. WRITING STYLES IN BUSINESS LETTERS

The pace of today's business life requires swift exchange of information. E-mail messages often replace both traditional business letters to outside partners or organizations and memos to superiors, subordinates or peers within the organization.

Whatever channels of communication you choose to deliver your business message do not forget that there are certain rules in international business correspondence which are recommended to follow if you turn to business writing. First of all they concern the language style and the layout of a business letter.

The style of a business letter implies usage of common vocabulary in different spheres of business activities. However, if business partners maintain correspondence in a certain sphere, such as banking, medicine, education or trade, it is necessary for them to know certain terms and terminology.

The tone of a business letter is as important as the vocabulary you use. It should be confident, consistent, polite, and sincere.

Depending on the formality of the occasion for writing a business message, *three different language styles are often found in business writing:*

Formal style is used in *traditional business letters* (sometimes regarded old-fashioned in everyday e-mail business writing). Its characteristic features are found both in the vocabulary used and syntactical patterns:

1. A special system of clichés, terms and set expressions used both in English and Russian.

2. The use of abbreviations, conventional symbols and contractions (*Appendix 1 ‘Abbreviations Used in Business Documents’*).
3. The use of words in their logical dictionary meaning. There is no room for contextual meanings or for ambiguity.
4. Words with emotive meaning are not to be found in the style of traditional business correspondence. Even such greetings and complimentary closings as *Dear Sir — Yours faithfully*, used in business letters, are regarded as conventional phrases of greeting and closing.
5. The use of modal verbs and phrases; tense forms; passive forms; conditional mood; full forms of auxiliary verbs.
6. The use of verbal complexes instead of complex sentences.

Neutral / Standard style is the most common one used in *professional / work e-mails*. Its features are characterized by:

1. Simple, clear and direct language.
2. The language is not formal, still the vocabulary used lacks emotive or slang words. But in case the subject-matter of the e-mail is important, the language style should be formal rather than standard.
3. Sentence patterns are short and simple.
4. Auxiliary verbs may be used in a contracted form.

Informal is the most common style for e-mails between friends. Sometimes the e-mail can be very short or it could include personal news, funny comments etc. This is the style that is closest to speech, so there are everyday words and conversational expressions. The reader will also be more tolerant of bad grammar.

Practice tasks

Task 1. Match informal phrases with their formal or neutral equivalents:

1. What do you need?	a. With regard to ... (or With reference to)
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2. Thanks for the e-mail of 1 Mar.

3. Sorry, I can't make it.

4. I'm sorry to tell you that ...

5. I promise ...

6. Could you ... ?

7. You haven't ...

8. Don't forget ...

9. We need to ...

10. Shall I ... ?

11. But ... / Also ... / So ...

12. Please can you ...

13. I'm sorry for ...

14. Re ...

15. See you next Tuesday.

b. I can assure you that ...

c. We note from our records that you have not ...

d. Please let us know your requirements.

e. I was wondering if you could ...

f. We would like to remind you that ...

g. I look forward to meeting you next Tuesday.

h. Thank you for your e-mail received 1 March.

i. I am afraid I will not be able to attend.

j. Would you like me to ... ?

k. I would be grateful if you could ...

l. Please accept our apologies for ...

m. It is necessary for us to ...

n. We regret to advise you that ...

o. However ... / In addition ... / Therefore ...

Task 2. The abbreviations given below are often used in business documents. Put each of them into one of these categories:

time, money, people, companies, other

MD, AGM, i.e., Plc, n/a, ASAP, AOB, lmt, Co, ad, PAYE, GMT, CEO, e.g., c/o, Corp, SFr, p.a., am, Assn, IOU, a.m., N/A, B/L, Ltd, VAT

Each business document has its own *pattern of composition and layout*. Here belong a traditional business letter, e-mail letter, memorandum, business report, and contract. And it will not be an exaggeration to say that the form of the document is itself informative. To some extent a business letter is your business card. Keeping to standards of business writing or violating recommended guidelines reflect how much accurate, punctual or careless and inconsistent you are in business deals.

Despite all the differences between formal, neutral and informal styles in business writing as well as in their layout, they have one thing in common — the component parts of the body of the letter are always the same: opening salutation, the subject heading, the opening paragraph, the subject-matter, the closing paragraph, complimentary closing, and the signature of the sender.

Compare the following sample business letters arranged in different styles:

1. E-mail Letters

1. Neutral / Standard style

To: judith_james@business.co.com

From: margaret@tutor.com

Date: 13.5.16 11:20

Subject: International Business Etiquette Seminar

Dear Judith

We are considering sending some of our staff on a training seminar on International Business Etiquette. Do you have a suitable one to hold within the next few weeks? If so please let me have the dates and charges.

If there isn't a regular seminar scheduled, can you tailor-make one specifically for our staff?

Perhaps we can arrange to meet to discuss this. Are you free next Wednesday at 13 pm? I could come over to your office, or you could come over to mine. Please let me know.

Best regards,

Margaret Tutor, Project Manager
Business Communication Consultancy

Tel: +65 9753124

Tips to remember:

1. *The language style of e-mails of this type is rather causal and direct, as if you are speaking.*
2. *Auxiliary verbs may be contracted.*
3. *Do not use CAPITAL LETTERS to emphasise a word or a phrase, they imply SHOUTING. It will make the tone of your e-mail impolite.*
4. *Short, 'straight to the point' sentences arranged in short paragraphs are used.*

2. Informal style

To: judith_james @business.co.com

From: margaret@tutor.com

Date: 13.5.16 11:20

Subject: International Business Etiquette Seminar

Hello Judith

I hope things are well with you.

I hear that your company holds seminars on International Business Etiquette. The idea is to train some of our staff and I'd like to have more details of the topic.

I hope you'll find time to put me into the picture if I drop by at your office one of these days.

Please let me have a free date when you are over there.

See you soon.

Maggie

2. Traditional Business Letters

Any traditional business letter has the following parts arranged in a certain order:

1. The letterhead, which contains the name of the sender (in a personal business letter) or the name of the company, postal address, telephone number / numbers, fax number, e-mail address.
2. The date of the letter.
3. The inside address (the name and the postal address of the addressee).
4. Opening salutation.
5. The subject heading.
6. The body of the letter.
7. Complimentary closing.
8. The signature of the sender.

Compare the styles of the following traditional business letters.

Letter # 1

**Construction and Repair Corp.
22650 Executive Drive, Virginia 20166, US
tel. 695403; fax 6954589**

Cyrela Production,
R. Pensilvânia, 114,
São Paulo — SP, 04564-000,
Brazil

7 June, 2016

Subject: polishing machines

Dear Sirs,

We are interested in the polishing machines manufactured by your company and advertised in the latest issue of “Engineering & Construction”.

Please send us your latest catalogues and price lists for the latest models. We would be much obliged if we could have them by return.
We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,
Mr J. Wood, Marketing Manager

Letter # 2

Cyrela Production
R. Pensilvânia, 114, São Paulo — SP, 04564-000
tel. +55 11 5543-7500

Mr J. Wood, Marketing Manager
Construction and Repair Corp.
22650 Executive Drive
Virginia 20166
US

17 June, 2016

Dear Mr J. Wood

Subject: polishing machines

Thank you for your letter of 7 June 2016.

I have pleasure in sending you our latest catalogue and a price list for the whole range of polishing machines manufactured by our company.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Santos, Marketing Manager

Enc.: catalogue

Letter # 1 is written in a traditional semi-indented style: each paragraph starts five digits from the left margin. Besides, semi-indented style is characterized by so called closed pattern of punctuation. It means that a comma is used in the following cases:

- the date (before the year);
- the inside address (at the end of each line);
- after the opening salutation;
- after the complimentary closing.

Semi-indented style is usually used in highly official letters written on important or solemn occasions.

In letter # 2 block style is used. In everyday business correspondence it is most popular and widely spread. As distinct from the semi-indented style each line of the block style starts from the left margin without indentation and there are two spaces between the lines. Besides, open pattern of punctuation is typical for the block style, which means that you do not put the comma in writing the date, inside address, opening salutation and complimentary closing.

Keeping to the following guidelines will help you to lay out a business letter correctly.

2.1. The Letterhead. In case a company uses a printed form for business letters all the information concerning its name, postal address etc. is given there. Otherwise all the information about the company (the name of the company, postal address, telephone number / numbers, fax number, e-mail address) is centred at the top of a sheet of paper. There are no restrictions as to the font chosen.

In a personal business letter information about the sender is put in the right top corner of a sheet of paper.

2.2. The date of the letter is put on the right-hand side of the sheet on the level of the inside address. It is recommended to write the name of the month in a word but not in numbers, as the meaning of their sequence is different in the USA and GB. For example: 12.02.15 means “the 2nd of December of 2015” in the USA and “the

12th of February of 2015" in GB. The names of the following months may be abbreviated:

Jan for January
Feb for February
Mar for March
Apr for April
Jun for June
Aug for August
Sept for September
Oct for October
Nov for November
Dec for December

The names of May and July are always given in full.

Sometimes ordinal numerals denoting days of a month are followed by such abbreviations as *st*, *nd*, *th*:

1st March, 2011 or 1st Mar, 2011; 2nd of July; 7th February, 2015 or 7th Feb, 2015.

In American business letters the dates have the following order: Dec 14, 2016 or December 14, 2016. The date itself is put in the left upper corner above the inside address.

2.3. The inside address. The inside address or the address of the company you are writing to is put on the left. You state the name of the addressee on the first line. Who will be named as such depends on who you are writing to:

a) the name of the company — the letter is addressed to the company:

Black & Co. Ltd
33 Highroad
London N 6
England

b) The Secretary — you do not know who in the company deals with the issue you are concerned. In this case the secretary will clear up its destination:

The Secretary
Black and Co. Inc
1356 Sweet Ave.
New-York N.Y.
USA

c) the position of an official the letter is addressed to:

The Manager
Black & White Co.
12 High Street
Detroit Michigan 43217
USA

If you know the name of the official you are writing to, it is better to state it placing before the position:

Mr J. Rocks, Manager

A postal address of a business letter is laid out in a certain order:

- first line — the number (or the name) of the building and the name of the street;
- second line — the name of the city and its ZIP code (in the USA the name of the state is added);
- third line — the name of the country either in full or abbreviated.

In case you want to send a letter to a person whose address you do not know but you know the address of the company your correspondent deals with, you write as this:

- first line — the name of your correspondent;
- second line — the abbreviation c/o (care of) before the name of the company;
- third line — the number (or the name) of the building and the name of the street;
- forth line — the name of the city and its ZIP code
- fifth line — the name of the country either in full or abbreviated.

Mr E. Black
c/o Ripe Wheat Co. Plc,
64, Darwin Road,
Liverpool, 16,
England

The following abbreviations are often used in the inside address:

1) names of companies:

- plc or PLC for Public Limited Company (in the names of English companies) — акционерное общество открытого типа;
- Ltd for Limited — акционерное общество закрытого типа, частная компания с ограниченной ответственностью;
- Black & Co. Ltd for Black and Company Limited. The sign “&” may be used only if it is part of an official name of the company;
- Corp. for Corporation (in the names of American companies) — корпорация;
- Inc. for Incorporated (in the names of American companies) — акционерное общество, зарегистрированное как корпорация.

2) Postal address:

- Rd for Road;
- St for Street;
- Sq. for Square;
- “#” — sign of number in the USA;
- “No” — sign of number in Great Britain.

3) the name of an addressee:

- Mr White, Mr J. White, Mr James White — addressing a man;
- Miss Black — addressing an unmarried woman or a young girl;
- Mrs Brown — addressing a married woman;
- Ms Grey — addressing a woman whose marital status you do not know.

If the name of your addressee is stated in the inside address, it may be followed by his position in the company:

Ms White, Sales Manager; Mr T. Smith, Professor; Mr N. Brown, Ph.D.

or:

Prof. John Harrison; Dr Samuel Glad

Tips to remember:

a) the initials of the name are closed with a full stop:
J.W. Brown; F. Harris;

b) a full stop is not used if the first and the last letters of an abbreviated word are the same as in a full word:

Dr (Doctor)	— доктор (звание)
Mr (Mister)	— господин, мистер
Mrs (Missis)	— госпожа, миссис
Ltd (Limited)	— обозначение частной компании с ограниченной ответственностью
Dept (Department)	— отдел
Rd (Road)	— дорога
St (Street)	— улица

c) a full stop is not used in conventional abbreviations used instead of the full names of some countries and organisations:

GB (Great Britain)	— Великобритания
UK (the United Kingdom)	— Соединенное Королевство
USA (the United States of America)	— США
CA (Canada)	— Канада
FR (France)	— Франция
IT (Italy)	— Италия
JP (Japan)	— Япония
G (Germany)	— Германия
UNO / UN (the United Nations Organisation)	— Организация Объединенных Наций
GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)	— ГАТТ (Генеральное Соглашение о Таможенных Тарифах и Торговле)

Tips to remember:

1. The names (including abbreviated ones) of companies, organisations, banks and their branches as well as the posts and positions stated in the inside address are written with a capital letter.
2. Functional words, such as articles, prepositions and conjunctions are written with a small letter. The definite article is an exception being the first word in the name of an organization:
Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Bank of England
3. The following transliteration is used for writing Russian proper names in English:

А — а	К — к	Х — kh
Б — б	Л — l	Ц — ts
В — в	М — m	Ч — ch
Г — г	Н — n	Ш — sh
Д — д	О — o	Щ — shch
Е — е	П — p	Ы — y
Ё — ё	Р — r	Ь — ”
Ж — zh	С — s	Ь — ’
З — z	Т — t	Э — e
И — i	У — u	Ю — yu
Й — ї	Ф — f	Я — ya

2.4. Salutation and complimentary closing. You should always remember that a salutation you use in a business letter always stylistically matches a complimentary closing. The choice of a match depends on the addressee of the letter:

1) the letter is written in the name of a company:

Dear Sirs — Yours faithfully

2) if the letter is written in the name of an American company, the following formula is used:

Gentlemen — Yours truly

3) the letter is addressed to a woman (married or single):

Dear Madam — Yours faithfully

4) the letter is addressed to an official whose name is unknown:

Dear Sir — Yours faithfully

5) the letter is written in the name of a certain official:

Dear Mr White / Dear Mrs White / Dear Ms White — Yours sincerely

The above examples show that addressing unknown people is more formal. Addressing your correspondent by name has a more friendly tone. A letter with the complimentary phrase “Yours very sincerely” at the end is still less formal.

6) if you are on friendly terms with your business partner and address them by name, the following salutation and complimentary closing is appropriate:

Dear Ronald — Best wishes

Dear Elizabeth — Cordially

7) There is a trend to use in business letters so called non-sexist language, in other words to avoid mentioning whether your partner is a man or a woman. So, instead of “Dear Sir”, “Dear Madam” a salutation stating the position of the addressee is used and the corresponding complimentary closing:

Dear Personnel Officer / Dear Sales Manager — Yours faithfully

Dear Editor / Dear Reader — Yours faithfully

Dear Parents / Dear Colleague — Yours faithfully

Never abbreviate a title that is not attached to a name: Doctor, Professor.

2.5. The subject heading names the subject-matter of the letter. Its arrangement depends on the style you lay out your letter. In semi-indented style it is typed below the opening salutation in

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