



THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP  
Champions of Public Education Across Canada

## PASSPORT to prosperity

### **PART A-PURPOSE: Business Letters**

#### **What is a business letter?**

A standardized format which can be customized for multiple purposes of business communication.

#### **Why should I teach it?**

Students need clarity about:

- The purposes for business letters
- How effective business letters look and sound
- The essential parts of the letter (format)

#### **How can these tools help?**

Many word processing programs include formats and wizards to assist students in writing effective letters. They can also find sample letters on-line for different purposes.

#### **How does it work?**

An effective business letter makes a great first impression. One writer describes these as the 7c's for good business writing:

- Clear
- Concise
- Correct
- Courteous
- Conversational
- Convincing
- Complete

#### **How can I assess student learning?**

Use the rubric included in the attached lesson plan.

#### **What resources can I access?**

The on-line writing lab hosted by Purdue University provides basics about writing business letters and also specific examples of letters of inquiry requesting follow up to an application or interview. It also includes a sample of how to request a letter of reference.

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p\\_basicbusletter.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_basicbusletter.html)

For criteria and checklists for good letters visit:

<http://esl.about.com/library/howto/htbusiness.htm>

Top 10 tips for students on writing business letters at <http://www.writinghelp-central.com/letter-writing.html>

For more information, please visit [www.employerregistry.ca](http://www.employerregistry.ca) and/or [www.thelearningpartnership.ca](http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca)

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Revised July 2009



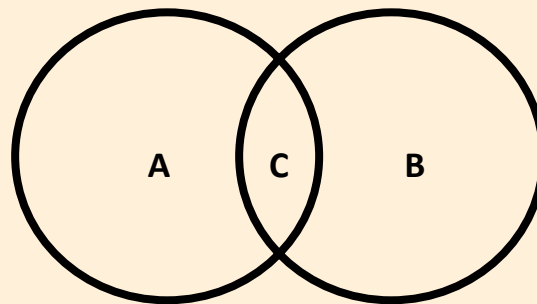
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## PART B-SAMPLE LESSON: Business Correspondence

### Introduction: Casual vs Business

1. Organize students in groups of 4.
  - Give each group 2 or 3 magazines.
  - Ask them to select photographs of men and women dressed in two styles, “Casual” and “Business.”
  - Looking at the two sets of photos, ask students to complete a Venn Diagram

#### Venn Diagram



A: Casual Style

B: Business Style

C: Common Features of Both Styles

2. Debrief with the class, asking for specific differences in the two styles with sample photographs to illustrate them.
3. Explain that they are now going to be looking at a similar comparison between personal letters and business letters. Maybe of the factors that distinguish casual dress from business dress will also be true of the two styles or formats of writing.

### Personal Correspondence vs Business Correspondence

1. Shuffle groups by using the strategy, “Two Stay, Two Stray”. Two members from each group will leave and join another group while two others stay to welcome 2 new partners.
2. Provide each group with the attached samples of personal and business correspondence.
3. Use the Venn diagram to compare the samples.
4. Debrief to identify significant differences in the two forms of communication.

## Essential elements

Use the sample business letters to identify the essential elements:

1. *Your Address:* (Not needed if the letter is printed on paper with the company letterhead already on it.): The return address of the sender of the letter so the recipient can easily find out where to send a reply to. Skip a line between your address and the date.
2. *Date:* Put the date on which the letter was written in the format Month Day Year i.e. August 30, 2005. Skip a line between the date and the inside address (some people skip 3 or 4 lines after the date).
3. *Inside Address:* The address of the person you are writing to along with the name of the recipient, their title and company name, if you are not sure who the letter should be addressed to either leave it blank, but try to put in a title, i.e. "Director of Human Resources". Skip a line between the date and the salutation.
4. *Salutation:* Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr. Last Name:, Dear Director of Department Name: or To Whom It May Concern: if recipient's name is unknown. Note that there is a colon after the salutation. Skip a line between the salutation and the subject line or body.
5. *Subject Line (optional):* Makes it easier for the recipient to find out what the letter is about. Skip a line between the subject line and the body.
6. *Body:* The body is where you write the content of the letter; the paragraphs should be single spaced with a skipped line between each paragraph. Skip a line between the end of the body and the closing.
7. *Closing:* Let's the reader know that you are finished with your letter; usually ends with Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Thank you, and so on. Note that there is a comma after the end of the closing and only the first word in the closing is capitalized. Skip 3-4 lines between the closing and the printed name, so that there is room for the signature.
8. *Signature:* Your signature will go in this section, usually signed in black or blue ink with a pen.
9. *Printed Name:* The printed version of your name, and if desired you can put your title or position on the line underneath it. Skip a line between the printed name and the enclosure.
10. *Enclosure:* If letter contains other document other than the letter itself your letter will include the word "Enclosure." If there is more than one you would type, "Enclosures (#)" with the # being the number of other documents enclosed that doesn't include the letter itself.
11. *Reference Initials:* If someone other than yourself typed the letter you will include your initials in capital letters followed by the typist's initials in lower case in the following format; AG/gs or AG:gs.

### Guided practice

1. Organize students in pairs. Give each pair a blank template ( attached)
2. Ask each group to use the form to write a business letter in response to one of these scenarios:
  - a) You are inviting the editor of the local community newspaper to do a presentation for your class on opportunities for volunteering for young people.
  - b) A teacher wrote a letter of reference that helped you to get an after-school job at a local store. You want to write a letter of thanks that is also copied to the school principal.
  - c) You have heard that your school trustee is considering setting up a student advisory group. You want to know more about this so you can decide if you would like to participate.

### Assessing our work

1. Review the rubric for a Business Letter (attached)
2. Ask each pair to use the rubric to assess their business letter and to submit their self- assessment with the final draft of the letter.

### Whole Group brainstorming

We have used the Business Letter format for several purposes:

- To request a presentation
- To send thanks
- To acquire information

What might be some other purposes or reasons to write a business letter?

1. Post the initial brainstorming list.
2. Ask students to gather additional information about uses of business letters by talking to parents or employers or by looking on-line for sample letters.
3. Continue adding to the list.

Note: For a list of specific business letters check <http://www.business-letters.com/categories.htm>



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### Extensions to the lesson

1. Take students to the computer lab to explore word processing programs that include templates and “wizard” support for letter writing (e.g. Microsoft Word)
2. Have students practice writing additional letters including:
  - a. -An application letter
  - b. -A cover letter
  - c. -Follow up letter (after interview, after submitting an application)
3. Have fun with Janet and Alan Ahlberg’s book for kids called *The Jolly Postman* (Houghton Mifflin) which includes samples of personal and business letters delivered to well-known fairy tale characters.

### Assessing Business Letters

For an excellent rubric, go to <http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/KSD/KR/WRITE/LETTER/rubric.doc>



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Sample Business Letters

1010 Firtree Lane  
Ottawa ON  
N6Y 3B8

January 14, 2005

Mr. Benjamin More  
Department of English  
Excellent Secondary School  
333 Bliss Carman Road  
Kingston ON K1G 9F2

Dear Mr. More:

I am writing to request a letter of recommendation. I was a student in both your Grade 11 and Grade 12 English class several years ago. One of the essays which I wrote for you in Grade 12 received an A and it was published in a collection of outstanding student essays, *Voices 2002*. At the time, you suggested that I might consider a career in the writing or publishing fields.

The time has come for me to follow your suggestion. I am currently studying journalism at Carleton University. I am applying for a summer job with the McGraw/Hill Publishing Company in Toronto. The company has asked me to supply them with three letters of recommendation. I would appreciate it if you could write one for me.

McGraw/Hill wishes to know the conditions under which you knew me, your understanding of my aptitude for writing and my qualifications to edit the work of others. I have enclosed a copy of my resume to help you write the letter.

McGraw/Hill would like the letter by the end of the month as I have an interview scheduled for the first week of February. If you would, please send it to the following person and address:

Betty Butler  
Human Resources Department  
McGraw/Hill Publishing Company  
22 Bay Street  
Toronto ON M1K 2B7

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter, and I sincerely appreciate your efforts on my behalf.

Sincerely,

Eliza Doolittle  
Enc: Resume

*Karin, the letter writer, speaks knowledgeably and sincerely as she presents a reasonable, thoughtful request.*

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355 Hutchinson Road  
Pascoag, RI 02859

November 5, 2000

Ms. Anne Cline, Head Cook  
Bay High School  
4562 Birch Road  
Pascoag, RI 02859

Dear Ms. Cline:

Last summer I became a vegetarian. After visiting my uncle's farm in Iowa, I couldn't bear the thought of eating meat anymore.

When school started, I thought I could eat school lunches by simply staying away from meat dishes. My plan worked for a few weeks, but it got tough to eat peanut-butter sandwiches and applesauce every day. The school lunch program is great for most students, but it doesn't work well for vegetarians.

After talking with other vegetarian students, I believe that the lunch program can work for everyone. Some options are to have a greater variety of side dishes and a salad bar every day that even non-vegetarians could enjoy. The school lunch program would then provide something for everyone.

I was happy with the school lunches before I became a vegetarian, and I hope that now you will be able to offer meals that I can enjoy just as much. Please respond to my request via school mail, or e-mail <kk@aol.com>.

Sincerely,  
Karin K.