

Letter Writing



Lead-in

Modern media like fax or e-mail are mostly used to send messages. But letters, especially official, still have not lost their importance although they are not sent by post so frequently as a few years ago.

Here are some dos and donts about writing official letters.

Do

- keep to this layout if you use unheaded paper. Some companies use a different format, but by using the format presented on this page you never make a mistake.

	Senders address (without name) including phone number and e-mail
	Our ref Your ref
	Date
Recipients name Recipients address	
Opening salutation	
Letter text	
Complimentary close (usually I/We look forward to hearing from you)	
Yours _____	
Signature (by hand) Senders name (typed out) Senders position in the company	
Enc. (Encl.)	

- ◇ write the date like this: 23 January 2001 or January 23, 2001 if you write to the USA. You avoid confusion.
- ◇ use Our ref. and Your ref. only if you and the recipient use a letter filing system
- ◇ start your letter with Dear Sir/Madam if you do not know the recipient by name or Dear Sirs if you write to an institution. Then close your letter with Yours faithfully
- ◇ start your letter with e.g. Dear Mr Brown or Dear Ms Jameson if you know the recipient by name. Then close your letter with Yours sincerely
- ◇ preferably use Ms when writing to a female recipient unless otherwise stated in the letter you have already received from her
- ◇ write Enc. or Encl. in the bottom left corner of your letter if you want to send something else together with your letter
- ◇ write your letter clearly, politely and concisely

Dont

- write the date in this form: 23/1/2001 or 1/23/2001. It might cause confusion, e.g. 2/1/2001 is 2 January 2001 in Britain, but 1 February in USA
- write town name in the date
- start your letter with Dear Ms Judith Jameson. You start an informal letter with Dear Judith and a formal letter with Dear Ms Jameson, but never mix up both.
- write an exclamation mark (!) in the opening salutation
- use short forms like Im, Id, you dont etc. in a formal letter.

LAYOUT

Task 1 Choose the right option:

1. On your official letter your name should appear
 - A. at the top, on the right
 - B. at the bottom
 - C. at the top and at the bottom

2. If you start your letter with Dear Sirs, you end it with
 - A. Yours sincerely
 - B. Best wishes
 - C. Yours faithfully

3. The abbreviation Enc. should appear:
 - A. at the bottom, on the left
 - B. at the bottom, on the right
 - C. below senders address

4. Senders address should appear
 - A. at the top, on the right
 - B. at the top, on the left
 - C. at the bottom, on the left

5. The complimentary close of an official letter reads:
 - A. I/We look forward about hearing from you
 - B. I/We look forward to hear from you
 - C. I/We look forward to hearing from you

6. Tick the **incorrect** opening salutation

- A. Dear Madam
- B. Dear Anne Morrison
- C. Dear Anne

7. Tick the **incorrect** date

- A. 12 January 2001
- B. January 12, 2001
- C. Bratislava, 12 January 2001

8. The abbreviation for Missis is

- A. Mrs
- B. Ms
- C. Mss

Task 1 Correct answers

1B, 2C, 3A, 4A, 5C, 6B, 7C, 8A

Task 2 Make the necessary corrections in this letter

Milan Juran
Zelená 25
911 01 Trenčín
Slovakia

English Language School
54 Poplar Street
LONDON SW8 7AC

Trenčín, 4 February 2001

Dear Misters

I should be grateful if you could send me your information brochure about courses offered by your school in 2001.

My brother and I are university students and are interested in summer courses in July or August.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Milan Juran

Task 2 Correct answers

Zelená 25
911 01 Trenčín
Slovakia

English Language School
55 Poplar Street
LONDON SW8 7AC

4 February 2001

Dear Sirs

I should be grateful if you could send me your information brochure about courses offered by your school in 2001.

My brother and I are university students and are interested in summer courses in July or August.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Milan Juran
Milan Juran

KINDS OF BUSINESS LETTER INVITATION

a) Invitation to a conference

Task 3 Fill in the gaps in this letter of invitation with prepositions from the menu

of in on before In to on from for to of

Dear Mr Smith

I am writing _____ behalf _____ the Organising Committee _____ the 5th International Conference _____ Information Technology. The conference will take place _____ 25 _____ 28 June 2001.

Please find enclosed the programme and attendance request form.
_____ order to assure accommodation _____ conference participants _____ good time we would be very grateful if you could return the attendance request form _____ 1st June 2001.

We look forward _____ hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Task 3 Correct answers

Dear Mr Smith

I am writing **on** behalf **of** the Organising Committee **of** the 5th International Conference **on** Information Technology. The conference will take place **from 25 to 28 June 2001**.

Please find enclosed the programme and attendance request form.

In order to assure accommodation **for** conference participants **in** good time we would be very grateful if you could return the attendance request form **before 1 June 2001**.

We look forward **to** hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Refusing (declining) an invitation

Mr Smith is not able to come to the conference. In his letter he informs the organising committee about this fact.

Task 4 Fill in the gaps in this letter with words from the menu

arranged pleased faithfully commitment participate
regret honouring series

Dear Sirs

I am _____ and honoured by the invitation to _____ in your conference. I very much _____ to say that it will not be possible for me to participate this time. Between 20th and 30th June 2001 I am giving a _____ of lectures at the University of South Essex. It was _____ last January and I cannot change this _____ any more.

Thank you once more for _____ me with your invitation.

With very good wish for the success of the conference,

Yours _____

Andrew Smith
Andrew Smith

Task 4 Correct answers

Dear Sirs

I am **pleased** and honoured by the invitation to **participate** in your conference. I very much **regret** to say that it will not be possible for me to participate this time. Between 20th and 30th June 2001 I am giving a **series** of lectures at the University of South Essex. It was **arranged** last January and I cannot change this **commitment** any more.

Thank you once more for **honouring** me with your invitation.

With very good wish for the success of the conference,

Yours **faithfully**

Andrew Smith
Andrew Smith

We must remember

to take part **in** a conference
to participate **in** a conference

and **not** *to take part on a conference
* to participate on a conference

b) Invitation to a reception

Here is one more example of a formal invitation to a reception:

Mr John Bartleby
Director General of A&B Computers Inc.
and
Mr Ján Pokorný
General Manager of A&B Computers Slovakia
request the presence of

Mr and Mrs Kováč

at the reception on the occasion of the opening of new A&B Computers premises in Bratislava at 6 p.m. on Thursday 9 July 2001 at Holiday Hotel.

R.S.V.P A&B Computers Slovakia, Nová 25, 814 55 Bratislava
Regrets only

Mr and Mrs Kováč has to decline this invitation because of previous engagements in a short letter:

A&B Computers Slovakia
Nová 25
814 55 Bratislava

Mr and Mrs Kováč thank Mr John Bartleby and Mr Ján Pokorný for their kind invitation to the reception on 9 July, but regret that they are unable to attend due to prior engagements.

WE MUST REMEMBER

RSVP or R.S.V.P. comes from French (répondez s'il vous plait) and means "please answer". If you receive an invitation with **R.S.V.P., Regrets only**, it means that you answer only in the case you have to **decline** the invitation. You do not need to send any confirmation of your presence if you want to come.

ENQUIRIES AND REPLIES

Task 5 Fill in the missing words from the menu in the gaps in the letter

audience
Hopefully
grateful
listeners
currently

invaluable
entirely
opinion
obliged
views

GOLDEN CITY RADIO Listeners survey

Mr John Smith
35 Main Street
Cadbury
England

January 2001

Dear Listener,

We are _____ conducting a survey seeking the opinions and _____ of our listeners. We have recently distributed a questionnaire to a selected sample of _____, of whom you were one. _____, you have received the questionnaire.

The questionnaires are _____ anonymous. We would be very much _____ to you for answering the questions. The information that you will provide is _____ and will help us to continue to improve the quality of our programmes.

We would be _____ if you could complete and send us the questionnaire as soon as possible. The results of the survey will represent the views of our _____ and it is therefore important that we receive as many completed questionnaires as possible. Everyone's _____ is important.

Thank you for your help,

W Williams
William Williams
Programme Director

Task 5 Correct answers

GOLDEN CITY RADIO
Listeners survey

Mr John Smith
35 Main Street
Cadbury
England

January 2001

Dear Listener,

We are **currently** conducting a survey seeking the opinions and **views** of our listeners. We have recently distributed a questionnaire to a selected sample of **listeners**, of whom you were one. **Hopefully**, you have received the questionnaire.

The questionnaires are **entirely** anonymous. We would be very much **obliged** to you for answering the questions. The information that you will provide is **invaluable** and will help us to continue to improve the quality of our programmes.

We would be **grateful** if you could complete and send us the questionnaire as soon as possible. The results of the survey will represent the views of our **audience** and it is therefore important that we receive as many completed questionnaires as possible. Everyones **opinion** is important.

Thank you for your help,

W Williams
William Williams
Programme Director

Task 6 Solve this jigsaw puzzle. Put the letter in the correct order.

We are pleased to hear of your companys interest in purchasing our Axer 550S scanner.

22 May 2000

You asked about a quantity discount.

Thank you for your letter of 15 May enquiring about our new scanner models.

We will be happy to discuss this if you give us some idea of the quantity you are ordering.

Sales Manager

Our terms of payment are 15 days after the receipt of invoice.

Yours sincerely

Mr J. Carmicle
Manager
JC Software
19 Market Street
Brighton BN4 6CD

We would also like to draw your attention to our Packard 305C model which has just been introduced to the market.

MB COMPUTERS

25 Bayswater Road, Putney PT7 9DS, tel/fax 0432-243 8719, e-mail:
Mary.Bates@mbcom.co.uk

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Mary Bates

Dear Mr Carmicle

Do not hesitate to contact us if you want to get any more information.

Mary Bates

Task 6 Correct answers

MB COMPUTERS

25 Bayswater Road, Putney PT7 9DS, tel/fax 0432-243 8719, e-mail:
Mary.Bates@mbcom.co.uk

Mr J. Carmicle
Manager
JC Software
19 Market Street
Brighton BN4 6CD

22 May 2000

Dear Mr Carmicle

Thank you for your letter of 15 May enquiring about our new scanner models.

We are pleased to hear of your company's interest in purchasing our Axer 550S scanner.

You asked about a quantity discount.

We will be happy to discuss this if you give us some idea of the quantity you are ordering.

Our terms of payment are 15 days after the receipt of invoice.

We would also like to draw your attention to our Packard 305C model which has just been introduced to the market.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you want to get any more information.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Bates
Mary Bates
Sales Manager

Task 7 Put the words in the correct order to make a sentence. The first word of the sentence starts with capital letter.

1. 17 January Thank of for letter you your
2. BC 150 printers of 5 received for pieces We order your
3. GBP gross 4,255 price of offer can a We
4. 751 is 10% GBP a unit including price discount quantity The
5. letter be by may of Payment done credit
6. On payment on orders all initial require we delivery
7. period credit subsequent 15 For orders allow day we all a
8. allow delivery 5 Please for days
9. soon from hearing to look you forward We

Task 7 Correct answers

1. Thank you for your letter of 17 January.
2. We received your order for 5 pieces of BC 150 printers.
3. We can offer a gross price of 4,255 GBP.
4. The unit price including a 10% quantity discount is 751 GBP.
The unit price is 751 GBP including a 10% quantity discount.
5. Payment may be done by letter of credit.
6. On all initial orders we require payment on delivery.
7. For all subsequent orders we allow a 15 day credit period.
8. Please allow 5 days for delivery.
9. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

COVERING LETTER

Covering letter is a letter we write to a company in which we apply for a vacant position. We send it together with our cv.

- Here are some guidelines for this letter:
- the layout is the same as in other types of official letter
- in the first paragraph refer to where you saw the position advertised
- then list briefly your previous positions, but only those **that are relevant** to the position you apply for
- indicate your work experience, current level of responsibility and benefits you can bring to your employer
- **never** use the word job, but use post or position instead

Task 8 Put the words in the correct order to make a sentence/part of a sentence. The first word of a sentence starts with capital letter. Please note that company names and position names also start with capital letters.

1. Network for of I Manager the wish position apply to,
2. November in Revue which Computer edition of advertised the was.
3. as Supervisor currently a Network MM Computing work at I.
4. I field the experience of supervision in network years have three.
5. taking Prior current my to post,
6. Programmer I Microcomputer plc for Analyst as an worked,

7. responsible software for design where business I was new.
8. let information there further any require know is if me you Please.
9. forward to you from look hearing

Task 8 Correct answers

I wish to apply for the position of Network Manager,
which was advertised in the November edition of Computer Revue.
I currently work as a Network Supervisor at MM Computing.
I have three years experience in the field of network supervision.
Prior to taking my current post,
I worked as an Analyst Programmer for Microcomputer plc,
where I was responsible for new business software design.
Please let me know if there is any further information you require.
I look forward to hearing from you.

WE MUST REMEMBER

In a covering letter we never use the word "job", but **post** or **position**.

Task 9 After having sent a covering letter to his future employer and a successful interview, Mr Chovanec has received a letter in which his future employer informs him that the employment is confirmed. Fill in the missing prepositions in this letter.

Dear Mr Chovanec

With reference (**for/to/about**) our telephone conversation (**from/in/of**) 5 April, I am pleased to confirm the offer (**for/of/on**) a position as a technical specialist (**by/in/on**) our company.

Please find enclosed two copies (**of/to/for**) the contract (**about/of/on**) employment. Would you please sign both copies and return them (**in/by/to**) our office. We also send you an information leaflet given (**for/to/among**) all employees providing information related (**of/for/to**) social benefits, staff canteen and other facilities run (**on/to/by**) our company.

Should you have any queries (**at/about/to**) your conditions of employment, please do not hesitate to contact the Personnel Department.

I look forward (**about/for/to**) seeing you (**at/in/on**) 15 April, and hope this will be the beginning (**of/for/in**) a long and mutually beneficial co-operation.

Yours sincerely

J Pavlov ·
Jana Pavlov ·
Personnel Manager

Task 9 Correct answers

Dear Mr Chovanec

With reference **to** our telephone conversation **of** 5 April, I am pleased to confirm the offer **of** a position as a technical specialist **in** our company.

Please find enclosed two copies **of** the contract **of** employment. Would you please sign both copies and return them **to** our office. We also send you an information leaflet given **to** all employees providing information related **to** social benefits, staff canteen and other facilities run **by** our company.

Should you have any queries **about** your conditions of employment, please do not hesitate to contact the Personnel Department.

I look forward **to** seeing you **on** 15 April, and hope this will be the beginning **of** a long and mutually beneficial co-operation.

Yours sincerely

J Pavlová
Jana Pavlová
Personnel Manager

Here are examples of other phrases where the prepositions used in the exercise occur:

Of

- ... thank you for your letter **of** 6 June 2001...
- ... I have received a consignment **of** 4 computer printers...
- ... I have instructed one **of** my employees to...
- ... please find enclosed the latest catalogue **of** our products...
- ... your product has been showing signs **of** deterioration...
- ... because **of** the damage caused by wrong transport, we were not able to...
- ... I have three years experience **of** C language programming
- ... people **of** five countries are taking part in the conference

By

- ... the first draft of the project should be submitted **by** 28 May
- ... because of the damage caused **by** wrong transport, we were not able to...
- ... they have agreed to pay **by** invoice
- ... this shop is run **by** our company

About

... I am sorry **about** the inconvenience you have experienced...
... thank you for your letter of ... in which you enquired **about** terms of payment

In

... the type you have chosen is currently not **in** stock...
... our company will be able to send you the product **in** the near future
... there would certainly be no trouble **in** supplying you from our wide selection of software products...
... thank you for your interest **in** our PCs...
... prior to taking my current post, I worked **in** A&B Software...
... my experience **in** the fields of C and Pascal languages...
... during my study I was involved **in** the development of...
... please confirm if you can take part **in** the conference...

On

... It is essential that we deliver this consignment to our US customers **on** time...
... let me apologise for your order not being delivered **on** the due date...
... please send me a detailed report **on** Mr Browns program...
... the sum will be paid **on** delivery...

To

... please find enclosed further details related **to** the program of the conference...
... I am writing **to** you with reference **to** our meeting on...
... I look forward **to** seeing you soon...
... In reply **to** your letter of 21 May, I am pleased to inform you that...
... please complete the enclosed form and send it **to** us...
... the program is tailored **to** customers needs

For

ÖThank you **for** your letter of...
... from 1999 to 2001 I worked **for** MDC Software...
... We have arranged **for** the consignment of computers to be sent to...
... We have enclosed the application form **for** you to complete and send to us
... We have been dealing with your company **for** ten years...

From

... In 1999 I graduated **from** the Faculty of...
... **from** the information in your letter, we can confirm that...
... **from** 1995 to 2000, I studied at the Faculty of...

COMPLAINT

Full structure of a letter of complaint can be found in the textbook, pages 30-31, but here are some dos and don'ts about it in short:

DO

- explain your problem clearly
- state the reason of your complaint
- suggest a measure/measures that should follow your complaint
- be polite

DON'T

- be emotional, it will only make things worse

Task 10 Simple Past or Present Perfect? Choose the right options in the following letter.

Dear Mr Jameson

As you know, we **have bought/bought** two photocopiers from your company and been quite satisfied with their performance. We **have even recommended/even recommended** your photocopiers to our partner company. Recently, however, the standard of your maintenance service **has got/got** much worse.

Our 230 CS photocopiers **have been installed/were installed** in 1999 and your maintenance service **has kept/kept** them in perfect working order. When there **has been/was** a breakdown, your company **has used to/used to** send a mechanic at 24 hours notice. Since March 2000 the situation **has become/became** worse and the mechanic promises to come in about 3 or 4 days^í and is unable to tell us when exactly he will be arriving. Last week he **has arrived/arrived** at 4 pm on Friday afternoon and our secretary **has been/was** unable to leave work until your man had finished.

Let me say that we are not satisfied with the quality of the services your company **has provided/provided** since last March. We **have already spoken/already spoke** with your mechanic about that, but there has been no change so far.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you can promise the immediate improvement in your maintenance services.

Yours sincerely

Task 10 Correct answers

Dear Mr Jameson

As you know, we **have bought** two photocopiers from your company and been quite satisfied with their performance. We **have even recommended** your photocopiers to our partner company. Recently, however, the standard of your maintenance service **has got** much worse.

Our 230 CS photocopiers **were installed** in 1999 and your maintenance service **kept** them in perfect working order. When there **was** a breakdown, your company **used** to send a mechanic at 24 hours notice. Since March 2000 the situation **has become** worse and the mechanic promises to come in about 3 or 4 days^í and is unable to tell us when exactly he will be arriving. Last week he **arrived** at 4 pm on Friday afternoon and our secretary **was** unable to leave work until your man had finished.

Let me say that we are not satisfied with the quality of the services your company **has provided** since last March. We **have** already **spoken** with your mechanics about that, but there **has been** no change so far.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you can promise the immediate improvement in your maintenance services.

Yours sincerely

Present Perfect Tense (predprítomný čas)

In business letters we use Present Perfect

- *to describe finished actions that are important now (the exact time is not given)*

Our firm has bought 2 PCs from your company and been satisfied with them. (The firm still owns the PCs and is still satisfied)

- *to describe actions that represent new information to the recipient of the letter (the exact time is not given)*

We have been recommended to your company by one of our clients.

- *with time words, e.g. ever, never, before, recently, often, already, yet, since.*

Our partner has already used your products.

Simple Past Tense (jednoduch " minul " Ěas)

In business letters we use Simple Past

- *to describe finished actions, mostly with time expressions referring to a finished time, e.g. last Monday, last week, yesterday, a week ago etc. (the exact time is given)*

We received your letter on 12 January.

Your technician arrived yesterday, but was unable to repair our fax machine.

- *never is also used in sentences describing finished actions*

The photocopiers we received in 2000 never worked correctly.

Task 11 ...and now try one more

Dear Ms Whitcombe

We **have received/received** your July shipment of ND 750 fax machines and a statement for 11,910 GBP, but noticed that several errors **have been made/were made** by your company.

- 1) Wrong type connecting cords **have been delivered/were delivered**.
- 2) Invoice No. XZ 9872 for 5,780 GBP **has been debited/was debited** twice.
- 3) You **have charged/charged** us 350 GBP for a delivery of 2 modems, invoice No. BT 4570, but we **have never ordered or received/never ordered or received** them. Could you check your delivery book?
- 4) The delivery **has been made/was made** on 23 January 2001 instead of 5 January 2001.

We would welcome the delivery of correct cords within 14 days. We **have also deducted/we also deducted** 6,130 GBP from your statement. We hope that such errors will not occur in the future. Otherwise our company would no longer be able to comply with the terms of the mutual contract.

Yours sincerely

Task 11 Correct answers

Dear Ms Whitcombe

We **have received** your July shipment of ND 750 fax machines and a statement for 11,910 GBP, but noticed that several errors **have been made** by your company.

- 1) Wrong type connecting cords **have been delivered**.
- 2) Invoice No. XZ 9872 for 5,780 GBP **has been debited twice**.
- 3) You **have charged** us 350 GBP for a delivery of 2 modems, invoice No. BT 4570, but we never ordered or received them. Could you check your delivery book?
- 4) The delivery **was made** on 23 January 2001 instead of 5 January 2001.

We would welcome the delivery of correct cords within 14 days. We **have also deducted** 6,130 GBP from your statement. We hope that such errors will not occur in the future. Otherwise our company would no longer be able to comply with the terms of the mutual contract.

Yours sincerely

Task 12 Match the adjectives on the left with the nouns on the right to form phrases that are commonly used in official letters.

social	benefits
vacant	brochure
particular	catalogue
price	discount
latest	experience
two years	form
quantity	interest
information	list
unit	post
application	price

Task 12 Correct answers

social	benefits
vacant	post
particular	interest
price	list
latest	catalogue
two years'	experience
quantity	discount
information	brochure
unit	price
application	form

E-mail writing

E-mail has become a widely used medium for sending messages and documents. Almost every

computer literate person has experience of sending messages via e-mail. But do we write them so that they have the necessary netiquette? Here are some dos and donts about e-mail writing:

Do

- ◇ use the words in the subject line that give the recipient an idea of what your mail is about
- ◇ start your formal e-mail messages with an opening salutation like this: Dear Mr/Ms Brown
- ◇ formal messages should look very much like an official letter
- ◇ start your informal message with an opening salutation as well, e.g. Hello Jack or Hi Jack or even Dear Jack
- ◇ write with your audience in mind (be careful about formality of your message)
- ◇ use punctuation to make your message understandable.
- ◇ check your message before sending for spelling and typing mistakes

Dont

- ◇ **SHOUT.** It means dont use capitals with the exception of the sentence beginning or proper noun like Susan, John, London etc. Using all capitals is considered shouting and it is very rude to the recipient.
- ◇ **spam.** Spamming is sending unwanted e-mail to e-mail addresses from your address book.
- ◇ **flame.** Flaming is using naughty words to offend someone. You can easily get flamed back.
- ◇ **write your message as one long sentence.** It will not be very understandable to the recipient.

Task 1 Here is an example of an e-mail message you will hardly like to receive. Can you change it so that there is more netiquette?

Peter, can u také a look at theese files I attached? need them at seminar on fri
WANT TO HEAR YOUR CMMENTS TILL THU.Mike

Task 13 Suggested answer

Hello Peter,
Please take a look at the files I attached. I need them for the seminar on Thursday. Can you send me your comments via e-mail till Thursday?
Thank you.
Mike

Task 14 Punctuate the message (use full stops and commas), use capital letters where necessary.

Dear Everyone

We have an offer for 4 participants for C language training course in Stary Smokovec the course is in two parts the weekend 27-28 January and the weekend 28-29 June between these two dates participants are expected to send two or three programs I would like two participants from secondary schools and two from tertiary education to take part I am organising a weekend course for mid February and then later at the end of May or beginning of June aimed at working with Windows NT there will be an outside expert to lead this I would like twenty participants on this

course both courses will have accommodation, food and travel paid for please let me know as soon as possible

Best wishes

John

Task 14 Correct answer

Dear Everyone,

We have an offer for 4 participants for C language training course in Stary Smokovec. The course is in two parts the weekend 27-28 January and the weekend 28-29 June. Between these two dates participants are expected to send two or three programs. I would like two participants from secondary schools and two from tertiary education to take part.

I am organising a weekend course for mid February and then later at the end of May or beginning of June aimed at working with Windows NT. There will be an outside expert to lead this. I would like twenty participants on this course.

Both courses will have accommodation, food and travel paid for.

Please let me know as soon as possible.

Best wishes

John