# Chapter 1: Planning and Writing Objectives

**Why are you writing?**

Make it easy for your reader to understand why you are writing by putting your objective at the beginning of your message. The clearer your reason for writing, the easier it is for your reader to reply or act.

## Common objectives

The following are all common reasons for writing (whether in formal letters or in more informal memos and emails.)

## To confirm

*I am writing to confirm* our appointment on ...

*This is to confirm* next week' s meeting at your offices.

*I would like to confirm* the details of my order.

## To ask for confirmation

Following our meeting yesterday, *I would be grateful if you could confirm*

the following points.

*Please could you confirm* the date of ...?

## To inform

*Please note that* the office will be closed from ...

*I am writing to inform you that* ...

*Please be informed that*, due to restructuring, the Sales Dept will...

*It has come to our notice / attention that* ...

*Please be advised that* the office will close from

*I am writing to advise you that* the office will close from ...

## To ask for information or advice

*I am writing to inquire (enquire BrE) about* vacancies in your company for

....

*I would be interested to find out more about* ...

*I would be interested to receive* further details about...

*Please could you give us some information / details on* your range of ...

*I would appreciate your advice concerning* …

*I would be grateful for your advice concerning ...*.

## To explain or to clarify

*I am writing to explain* the company's new procedure concerning ....

In response to the questions in your letter of , *I am writing withfurtherinformation.*

*I would like to clarify our policy regarding* ...

In response to your recent inquiry, *I hope that the following information clarifies* **…**

## To suggest or advise

In response to your complaint concerning ..., *may we suggest that* you contact ...

Following your inquiry regarding ..., *I would like to make the following suggestions*.

With regard to your email about ..., *we advise you to* contact ...

*We would like to advise* all (our current authors) to ...

In response to your letter, *we feel that it is advisable to...*

## To make an announcement

*It has been decided that* ***...***

Due to ..., *we have decided to ... We are happy to announce* ...

## To ask someone to do something

*I would be grateful if you could* send me further information about....

*I would greatly appreciate it if you would* ....

*Your help would be appreciated* in planning...

*Please would you* sign ....

*Kindly* check ...

*Please make sure that ...*

*Please ensure that* **…**

## To reply to someone's request

*As you requested,* I am enclosing ...

*As you suggested,* I am sending you ...

*In answer to your inquiry,* I ...

*As promised,* I am sending you...

## To thank

*Thank you for* your letter of February 15.

*I greatly appreciated* your assistance during …

## To enclose something

*Please find enclosed* the brochure you requested.

*Enclosed please find* an order form.

*Enclosed is / are ... I am enclosing* a ... *I have enclosed …*

## To attach something

*Please find attached* a route description. *Attached please find* this month's order. *Attached is / are …*

## To complain

*I am writing to complain about …*

## To apologize

*Please accept our apologies for* the delay.

On behalf of the company, *I would like to extend our sincerest apologies* for

...

*We were very sorry to hear about* your recent problem with …

## To give good news

*We are delighted to inform you that...*

## To give bad news

*Unfortunately***,** we are unable to ...

*Regrettably,* we are unable to ...

*We regret that* we cannot ...

*Due to circumstances beyond our control,* we are not able to ...

*We are sorry to inform you that* …

## Condolence

*I was very sad to hear* the news of John' s death.

## To make a threat

It appears from our records that payment is overdue. *We have no option but to refer this matter to* our legal team.

**Planning**

Make a plan before you start writing. Plans help you to structure your ideas, making it easier for your reader to follow you. Making a detailed paragraph plan (where you decide what you will include in each paragraph) also makes the actual writing easier and quicker.

In your plan, aim to:

* group your ideaslogically;
* keep your text relevant, and focused on yourobjective;
* avoidrepetition.

**How to plan – the brainstorming approach**

1. Decide on your objective-why are you writing? What information does the reader need to know?
2. Consider your reader. Is your reader an expert in the subject, or will you have to simplify technical language orconcepts?
3. List everything you want to write - jot down your ideas as you think of them. Then, decide which ideas are relevant and which ideas you can leave out.
4. Make a paragraph plan – order your ideas into logical paragraphs, and decide what linking words / phrases you'll need such as "Firstly, secondly, finally" or "However", or "Inaddition".
5. Write, following your plan, and then check what you have written against your plan. Have you included everything? Will the reader know what the next stepis?

**Putting your ideas into paragraphs**

If ideas fit together, they can be put together in one paragraph. However, if many ideas fit together, think about how you can separate them.

*We regret that we have no vacancies at the moment for computer programmers. However, we have vacancies for graphics designers as well as for database managers. We are interested in applicants who have at least two years' experience in graphic design and who have had some project management experience. For the database management posts, we are particularly interested in applicants with substantial background in database programming, application and maintenance. We would be especially interested in hearing from applicants with good working knowledge of php and MYSQL.*

**This text could be separated into these paragraphs:**

*We regret that we have no vacancies at the moment for computer programmers. However, we have vacancies for graphics designers as well as for database managers.*

*We are interested in applicants who have at least two years' experience in graphic design and who have had some project management experience.*

*For the database management posts, we are particularly interested in applicants with substantial background in database programming, application and maintenance. We would be especially interested in hearing from applicants with good working knowledge of php and MYSQL.*

**Chapter 2: Writing Letters**

## Making sure your letters look and sound professional

Although emails are used for most business situations, there will be situations when a letter is more appropriate. Letters tend to be more formal than emails, but there are standard guidelines and expressions that will help you write accurately and professionally every time.

## Structure of letters – layout

Most companies use headed notepaper, so you do not have to write your company name and address. The reader's name and address generally comesunder your company details on the left hand side of the paper. Underneath this put the date of the letter. Reference details go under the date of the letter. Not all letters need references, although large companies tend to use them for correspondence.

Some formal letters have a subject heading. If a heading is necessary, this comes under the opening (Dear X) and it is normally in bold.

Paragraphs are not normally indented in modern business correspondence. Instead, all new paragraphs are double spaced.

## Example

*Your company name and address, telephone and fax numbers; email address and website URL*

*Recipient's name Recipient'saddress*

*Date of this letter Reference (ifapplicable) Your ref:AD/600/22*

*Dear Mr / Ms Recipient's surname*

***Subject of your letter***

*Body of the letter starts here, with reference to why you are writing. New paragraph starts here – no indentation.*

*New paragraph starts here.*

*Closing (Yours sincerely, etc)*

*Your signature*

*Your name printed*

*Your position in the company Enc: (If applicable)*

## Writing the date

It's much clearer to write the date out in full, such as 10 November 2014, November 10, 2014 or November 10th, 2014.

Avoid 10/11/2014 or 11/10/2014 as these can be potentially confusing. In British English, the order is date, month, year. In American English, the order is month, date, year.

## Structure of letters – contents

Letters often contain:

* An opening
* Reference to previous contact or reason for writing
* (The background to the letter - optional)
* Main point or idea
* (Development of the main point - optional)
* (Additional points - optional)
* Asking for action / reference to the future
* Closing remarks

## Example

*Dear students*

1. *I am writing to inform you about some recent changes to the courses we currentlyrun.*
2. *As you are probably aware, there have been some changes infunding over the last year. These changes will affect the duration of some of our courses.*
3. *The day-release courses in printing and publishing are funded by the Local Education Authority. This means that employers will be reimbursed for the courses that their employees complete. I would like to stress that course participants must attend a minimum of 70% of the course to qualify for this funding.*
4. *There is no limit to the number of any courses that any student can register for. However, admittance to courses is regulated by a pre-course assessment.*
5. *Some of the courses we co-run with the Freemans Technology Institute are held on their campus. For more information on course location, please refer to the enclosed prospectus which gives details on the new academic year.*
6. *I hope that this information answers any questions you may have. However, if you have any further queries, please feel free to contactme.*

*Rebecca Beale*

*Academic Registrar Enc: Prospectus*

## Notes

1. Paragraph 1 - say why you are writing. You can often use a reference sentence to show the reference to a previous contact, such as apreviousletter or phone call. If you don't have any previous contact, use the first paragraph to state why you are writing: to confirm, clarify or ask about something, for example.
2. Paragraph 2 - background to the letter. The background gives more information and helps the reader become more familiar with the subject of the letter.
3. Paragraph 3 - main point
4. Paragraph 4 - development of main point
5. Paragraph 5 - additional points
6. Paragraph 6 - final paragraph. This paragraph generally closes the letter with an offer of further help, or invites a reply. In this paragraph you can also briefly mention the most important points again.

## Correct salutations (openings and closings) in British English Friends (first-name basis)

Dear Sarah

Best wishes (or Kind regards)

## Semi-formal business relationships

Dear MrBrown Yourssincerely

Dear Ms Smith Yourssincerely

## Formal letters, where the name of the reader is unknown

Dear Sir (or Dear Sirs) Yours faithfully

Dear Madam Yoursfaithfully

Dear Sir / Madam Yours faithfully

## Correct salutations (Openings and closings) in American English

Dear Mr. Robertson

Sincerely (or Sincerely yours)

Dear Sir (or Gentlemen) Truly

## Titles

1. **Women**

Women are generally addressed as 'Ms'. Only use 'Mrs' if you're sure that the woman is married and that she uses her married name. Avoid using 'Miss' unless you know that you're writing to a young girl (under the age of

16) or to a much older woman who never married. To be on the safe side, most writers use 'Ms', the female equivalent of 'Mr'.

## Academic

Other titles commonly used are 'Dr' if you are writing to either a medical doctor, or someone who has a doctorate. Bachelor or master degree holders are normally addressed as either 'Mr' or 'Ms'.

## Esq

British English writers sometimes use 'Esq.' in place of 'Mr'. For example, an envelope could be addressed:

John Smith, Esq.

1. **Military titles** Maj. (Major) Col. (Colonel) Lt. (Lieutenant)

## Religioustitles:

Rev. (Reverend) Fr. (Father)

Sr. (Sister)

## Punctuation

1. **Commas**

Some people put commas after both the opening and the closing:

Dear Sarah, Best wishes,

It is also correct to leave out the comma after the opening and the closing:

Dear Mr Smith Yours sincerely

## Full stop / Period

In British English, there is no full stop / period after Mr or Ms. In American English, the period is important – leaving it out can give the impression that you're careless:

Dear Mr. Brown Dear Ms. Richards

## I or We?

You can start your correspondence with "I" or with "We". If you're writing on behalf of your company, "We" is a good choice. If you're writing in a more personal style, you can use "I".

## Starting correspondence

In your first paragraph, make a reference to previous correspondence, or say why you're writing.

## Makingreference

*I am writing with reference to your letter of 6 November. With reference to* your letter (of date), I...

*In response to* your request, I can confirm...

*With regard to* your memo, I...

*Following* our conversation this morning, I.....

*Further to* yourletter of. , I (Further to tends to sound over formal for

most correspondence.)

*Thank you for* your letter of June 14th.

After the reference expression you must always have a comma and a second part to the sentence.

With reference to your letter. (Incorrect)

With reference to your letter, I can confirm that the invoice has been paid. (Correct)

## Making reference to something your reader knows

*As we discussed***,** the sales meeting will be on...

*As you may already know / have heard*, the Director of the company is ...

## Referring to many points raised in a letter

Avoid a shopping-list statement in response to a number of requests, as in "In response to your letter in which you asked for a brochure, requested information on discounts and suggested a meeting, I would like to confirm that....

Instead, start with Thank you.

*Thank you for* your letter of (date).

## Explaining your connection

*Your name was given to me by …*

*My colleague,* Sarah Smith, **s***uggested that I write to you* ...

*I have been advised to contact you regarding* ...

I am the content co-ordinator of an education website and *I am contacting you* to ask if you would be interested in...

## Ending correspondence Saying thank you

If you did not start your correspondence with "thank you", you can end with "thank you".

*Thank you for* your interest in the company / for your help.

*Thank you in advance for* your advice / understanding / co-operation. *May we take this opportunity to thank you for* your continued support. (Using May we... is formal.)

## Offering help

*Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance / if I can help you further*.

If you would like any more information, *please do not hesitate to contact me* ...

*Please feel free to contact me again if you have any more queries.*

*Should you have any further questions, we would be delighted to hear from you.* (Using should you... is formal.)

## Standard closings

*We look forward to hearing from you soon*. *I look forward to your reply*.

## Referring to a meeting

*I look forward to seeing you / meeting you* on January 12. (see note 1 for more information on "look forward to")

## Asking for action

*I would be grateful if* this matter could be settled immediately. I *would appreciate further information* on ...

*I would be grateful for* further advice.

I *would be grateful if you could* invoice us by...

(see note 2 for more information on using grateful / appreciate)

## Asking for the return of documents

*Please sign the enclosed and return* to us before...

## Apologizing and rectifying a problem

*Please accept our apologies for* this misunderstanding.

*We apologize (apologiseBrE) for the mistake / oversight* and would like to take this opportunity to assure you that it will not happen again.

*We deeply regret any inconvenience / distress* that this misunderstanding has caused you.

## Expressing urgency

*As this matter is now urgent*, we would appreciate a prompt reply. *As we hope you will appreciate, this matter is now urgent*. We would therefore be grateful if you could reply to us within (three days).

*We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience*.

*Due to the urgency of the situation*, I would appreciate a reply as soon as possible.

## Giving recommendations or suggestions

*We strongly recommend that you* follow these instructions. *It is recommended that you* read the instructions carefully. *May we recommend that you* notify the manufacturers.

*You might like to consider* taking legal advice.

*We would suggest* the smaller model.

*We suggest that you* invest in real estate.

*It would perhaps be wise to* delay a decision until after his return. (see Note 3 for the grammar rules for "recommend" and "suggest")

## Note 1

"Look forward to" is followed by either a noun or a gerund: "I look forward to the meeting." (noun)"

"I look forward to seeing you." (gerund)

## Incorrect

"I look forward to hear from you." "I look forward hearing from you."

## Correct

"I look forward to hearing from you."

## Note 2

"I would be grateful" is followed by either if + sentence or for + noun:

"**I would be grateful if you could** instruct the shipping company to dispatch the goods."

"**I would be grateful for** your assistance." "Appreciate" is followed by a noun or a gerund. **"I would appreciate your** advice."

"**I would appreciate meeting** you at the earliest opportunity." You can also use "appreciate + it + if + sentence".

"**I would appreciate it if you could look into** this matter immediately."

## Incorrect

"I would appreciate if..."

## Note 3

The verb "recommend" (like suggest and propose) can be used in three ways:

1. With anoun

"**We recommend the Ford** Toyota model."

1. With agerund

"**We recommend taking** further action."

1. With "that + you + infinitive without to" "**We recommend that you take** legaladvice."

## Other useful writing phrases Giving instructions

*Please make sure / ensure that* ...

*In future, please* put all used paper in the recycling bin.

## Giving opinions

*We think it would be advisable to* ...

*In our opinion*, the threat of legal action should be sufficient.

*As far as we are able to judge*... *We think that* ...

*Our opinion is that* ...

## Making, accepting and declining offers

*We would like to offer* you a 6%discount.

*We are unable to accept your offer* of ...

## Making, accepting and refusing invitations

*We would like to invite you to* the launch of …

*Would you like to* come to our party?

Thank you for your invitation. I *would be delighted to attend*.

Thank you for your invitation. *I regret that I will be unable to attend*.

## Making generalizations

*Generally*, we request pre-payment.

These components *tend to* wear out quickly. These components *have a tendency to* …

*In most cases*, we are able to find lost luggage within a few days.

## Expressing importance

*It is essential / crucial / vital / extremely important that* we … You can also use a verb after these adjectives:

*It is essential / crucial / vital to* ...

## Expressing certainty, probability and possibility

*It is bound to* work.

*There will definitely be* a market for...

*It is (highly) likely that* the plan will succeed.

*It is (highly) likely to* succeed.

*It is (quite) probable that* ....

*It is possible that* the market will expand.

*It may be the case that* ....

*Perhaps* the market will recover.

*It would seem unlikely that* we could ...

*There probably won't be* a demand for...

*There definitely won't be* a rise inprices.