

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS HOW TO WRITE “INFORMAL LETTER”

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Annotation

Every person writes a letter at some point of time in his life. Letters not only carry formal discourses but are also means of friendly conversations. How language and vocabulary is used in a letter reflects the skills and finesse of the writer as well. Therefore, it is essential to master the skill of writing a good letter from an early age. In this article we discuss about some tips for informal letter writing.

Key words: letter, informal, friendly conversations, personal letters, chatty, sharing information, Letter of permission, Letter of condolence, Letter of invitation, Letter of information, Letter of apology, Letter of appreciation.

An informal letter or a personal letter is a letter to a close friend or an acquaintance. Sometimes we need to communicate a lot of information and a letter or email may be the easiest way to do this. We may write a letter to mark a special occasion or to communicate something that's difficult to say face-to-face: for example, a letter expressing our sympathy when somebody has died, or a letter sending our congratulations on the birth of a new baby. These are personal letters. Personal letters may be short or long but they are usually chatty and informal.

Informal letters or friendly letters help us to keep in touch with our family and friends. It gives us an insight into their lives and experiences while we share a part of us at the same time. For this mutual exchange to occur satisfactorily, we need to study the basic rules and polish our skills through practice.

Informal letters can be classified into various types based on their content. They include

- Letter of permission
- Letter of condolence
- Letter of invitation
- Letter of information
- Letter of apology
- Letter of appreciation



This type of personal writing is represented by personal correspondence, thank you letters, letters of congratulation or condolences. All of these can be printed or handwritten. Formatting of a personal letter is similar to business one, but the differences are in style and punctuation.

- The heading in the upper right corner may consist of an address and date. We do not use punctuation at the end of the heading lines.
- The salutation placed at the left-hand margin is rather friendly and informal. We do use comma here, e.g. Dear Gran, Beloved Mum, Dearest Susie,
- The body may consist of one or more paragraphs, dealing with personal topics.
- The complimentary close is followed with a comma: e.g. Love, Jane Sincerely yours, Tom
- Signature is written below the complimentary close.

Letter writing still has a sentimentality about it that transcends all other forms of communication, and this is probably why some people stick to it even though they could use other means. There are no hard and fast rules about how to write an informal letter and common sense dictates that someone may use whatever works best for him. However, there is a conventional way of going about it that will make all the difference to apply it.

1. Address and date

Some people may think the address is not important in an informal letter and prefer to leave it out. That works well if the person you are writing to knows your address already or if she has a good memory! However, it is very unlikely that someone will always remember your address, so it is always a good idea to include it. This is the address they have to write to for the letter to reach. The recipient's address is on the envelope.

The address and date should be in the right hand corner. Writing to a person in another country, add the following details:

Hillcrest Secondary School,
P.O Box 60453,
Livingstone,
ZAMBIA
10101

7th February 2004



Since she already lives in Zambia, it is not necessary to include the country and the postcode i.e. 10101. However, if you are writing to someone outside the country, always include your country and post code.

After you have written the address, leave a line and write the date.

2. Salutation

The most common salutation in an informal letter is “Dear....”

Note that it is followed by a comma.

Dear Mimi,

However, some go extremely informal and use “Hey!” or “Hi!”

You should use your discretion. Obviously if you are writing to your father, you would not use “Hey!” unless of course you are extremely close.

3. Body

Here are a few things you should take note of:

❖ Paragraphs:

Since informal letters are usually written by hand, the paragraphs are usually indented. However, with more people using their computers to do most of their writing (and I have a bad feeling most people will forget how to write with their hands), it is becoming a common practice to write paragraphs without indentations—like the way this one is written. This, apparently, is the modern way of writing paragraphs.

❖ use informal language

The first paragraph generally expresses a greeting, followed by wishes of good health. Remember you are writing to someone you know very well, so try to be as friendly as possible:

How are you my dear sister?

However, always use your discretion. Try not to go overboard. Some people become bold and daring in letters and write things that they would otherwise not say to the person face to face. Obviously if you are writing to an adult that you respect, like your dad, try not to write things like:

“What’s up dude!” or “What’s going down?”



Try to picture the person you are writing to standing in front of you. Imagine the things that you would say to him and write them down. This will help you not to go overboard.

Also avoid boring sentences like...

“I am writing this letter to...”

...unless you are writing to a stranger. Even so, try to be as amiable as possible:

I have heard so much about you and would be head over heels with joy if you could agree to be my pen pal

Try to be as conversational as possible. You are allowed to use colloquial language – i.e. language that is appropriate for speech but not really for writing:

My journey back here was fine, though it was quite a long one. I wanted to travel by CR bus but guess what; all the wretched buses were full! So I had no choice but to travel by a small Rosa bus. The journey took seven hours. By the time we reached, my legs were tired and my bottom was severely sore, ugh! Next time, I promise, I’m not gonna use one of ‘em tiny buses!

❖ punctuation and spelling

I have come across a good number of letters that abound with spelling mistakes and awful punctuation. Such mistakes tend to distract the reader, so don’t neglect them even though you know your friend will understand.

The quality of your letter also speaks volumes about the kind of person you are so all the more reason to be careful!

If you use contractions, make sure that you put the apostrophe in the right places.

For example:

Isn’t and not is’nt

won’t and not wont

mustn’t and not must’nt

The contraction it’s is especially one that you must watch out for. It is the short form of it is or it has. But if you want to use it to indicate possession, you should use its and not it’s. Check out this example:

The dog lost its collar.

Remember also to use capitals for the right things i.e. the names of people, places, holidays, etc should all start with a capital letter.

Bottom line? Don’t throw away your grammar book!



❖ **consistence voice and style**

Use the active voice if you want your letter to sound more conversational and interesting. Avoid shifts in the voice. Check out this article on the advantage of using the active voice: Use active Voice

One common error is inconsistency in the tense. For example, read the following sentence:

I was going to town yesterday when a dog bite me and I ran all the way to the hospital.

Here is a sentence with starts in the past tense and then right in the middle, the tense changes to present and then finally reverts to past. Even if your friend is very understanding, this is still distracting.

❖ **Ask questions**

It is always a good idea to ask questions in the body of the letter that you would like the person to answer in their reply. Questions work as a good base on which to write a letter, and they give the recipient motivation to reply:

How are those wonderful brothers of mine?

Did I tell you that I am librarian too, eh?

In the following article we give some useful phrases for writing informal letters.

GREETING

Dear / Hello / Hi ...(),

INTRODUCTION

It's great to hear from you. / Many thanks for your e-mail / letter.

Sorry it's taken me so long to write back. / I haven't written for ages but ...

I've been really busy recently. / You've to know that I've been working really hard.

How are you? / How are things (with you)? / How's it going? / How's life?

I hope you're fine. / I hope you and your family are well. / I do hope this e-mail / letter will find you in good health and spirits.

Just thought I'd drop you a line.

REFERRING TO GOOD / BAD NEWS

Glad / sorry to hear / read about ...

I'm really glad / very happy to hear / read about ...

I'm extremely sorry / very sad to hear / read about ... MOVING THE TOPIC ON



By the way, have you heard about ... / Did you hear about ... / Tell me about ...

Oh, another thing I wanted to mention ... / So you want my advice about ...

Anyway, the reason I'm writing ... / Anyway, I was wondering ...

I thought I'd write to tell / ask you ...

ENDING

Well, time to go / to close! / Got to go now! / I've got to leave off now! / That's all for now.

Looking forward to hearing from you. / Hope to hear from you soon. / Write back soon!

Make sure you write soon! / Keep in touch! / Drop me a line if you have time!

Take care of yourself! / Look after yourself!

Let me know if you need anything. / Just give me a call if you have any questions left.

SIGN-OFF

Yours(,) / Your friend(,) /

Best wishes(,) / All the best(,)

Hugs(,) / Hugs and kisses(,)

Love(,) / Lots of love(,) / All my love(,)

Take care(,) / Bye for now(,)

Conclusion

As formal letters are formatted according to some specified structure informal letters also get formatted according to some kind of structure which is not as rigid as of formal letters. An informal letter does not need to express anything in particular, unlike a formal letter. It can be written in a simple, informal tone. They can cover a wide range of subjects because they are informal conversations. It can include anything you want to convey or communicate to your loved ones. Unlike official letters, you can use everyday language. You can follow the underwritten rules to write some good informal letters.

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