

AECC ENGLISH E-Lesson for B. Com. (Hns.) Sem. II

FORMAL LETTER

Formal letter is an inter-personal letter used in formal situations. It is used at workplace/ institute/ organization/ company. It is sent to unknown (could be sent to known people also sometimes) people. Semi-formal letter is sent to a person, whose name is known and the person is addressed by her/ his surname. Opening and closing of a letter indicates the level of formality.

Examples of formal letter

- ❖ Application
- ❖ Letter to the Editor
- ❖ Job related correspondence
- ❖ Complaint letter
- ❖ Suggestion letter
- ❖ Letter to the Principal

Elements of formal letter

- This letter is written in formal tone and expression.
- The format of such a letter is not so simple.
- One cannot be flexible in writing one's thoughts.
- The sequence of writing cannot be random.

Format of a formal letter

1. **Heading:** The name and address of the sender is at the top of the letter. If the letter is written on the letter-head, the address, phone number/s and email id/s are there. It is also called the **Return Address**.
2. **Reference number:** It is the number which is specific to a letter. It helps in locating the letter at a later stage. The reference number and the date make it a very specific identity of a letter
3. **Date:** Different formats of the date can be used—

12th March, 2020/ March 12, 2020/ 12th March 2020/ 12.03.2020/ 12/03/2020 03/12/2020

4. **Inside address:** It is the name and address of the receiver. These days organizations use cover envelope/s with cut/s at the place of inside address. The paper is folded in such a manner that the inside address is visible from outside and becomes the outside address.
5. **Subject line:** It is a short one line about the subject of the letter. It conveys the purpose of the letter.
6. **Salutation:** Commonly used 'Sir/ Madam' (when the person is unknown and there is no previous correspondence), 'Dear Sir/ Dear Madam' (when the person is known and there has been previous correspondence), 'Dear Ms. Sharma/ Dear Mr. Gupta' (when

the person is known formally), ‘Dear Rama/ Dear Rakesh’ (when the person is known well)

7. **Body of the letter:** The body/ subject-matter of the letter can be divided in three/ four paragraphs—
 - a) **Introduction:** The background/ context of the letter which introduces the topic of correspondence.
 - b) **Details of the body or main paragraph/s:** This is the main part of the letter where the details of the content of the letter are given. This is the part where the writer can show her/ his writing skills.
 - c) **Conclusion or Closing Paragraph:** This is the part of the letter where the writer focuses on the action required from the recipient of the letter— early reply, meeting in person, consider as a candidate, sanction the leave, approve the proposal and so on. Closing should be very effective to get the desired results.
 - d) **Last Paragraph:** ‘I shall be highly obliged.’
8. **Complimentary Close:** The letter does not end abruptly. The phrase— **8 a.** ‘Thanking you’ is followed by **8 b.** ‘Yours obediently’ (when the letter is written to the Principal/ Head of the Institution), ‘Yours truly’ (when the person is known), ‘Yours faithfully’ (when the letter is to the Head of the organization and the sender wishes to show her/ his loyalty), ‘Yours sincerely’ (when the person is unknown).
9. **Name/ Signature/ Designation slot:** This part carries the name, signature and designation of the sender. This provides authenticity to the letter as well as fixes accountability on the sender.
10. **Reference Initials:** Some organizations prefer the signatures of other personnel involved in dictating/ typing of the letter. It helps to locate the letter at a later stage as fix accountability.
11. **References:** Some people ask for references (especially in case of a job application). Generally, references from two people from a known field are asked for.
12. **Enclosures/ (Encl):** This is a list of photocopies of all documents sent with the letter. In case of an email, these are sent as attachments.
13. **Courtesy/ Carbon Copy/ (Cc) and/ or Bcc (Blind Carbon Copy):** When copies of the letter are sent to more than one person, **Cc** and/ or **Bcc** are use. The name and designation of the person/s is/ are written here.