

B.A. (Prog)II Sem
AECC-English

Letter writing is an essential skill. Despite the prevalence of emails and text messages, everyone has to write letters at some point. Letters of complaint, job applications, thank you letters, letters requesting changes or making suggestions — the list goes on and on. Encouraging children to write letters from an early age will improve their communication, social and handwriting skills, and teach them what they need to know about writing and structuring letters.

Letter writing has many purposes, including the following:

It encourages good manners, especially writing 'thank you' letters

One can write invitations

One can write letters to friends and relatives

Pen pals are always popular, giving insights into other people's lives, especially overseas

Type of Letters

INFORMAL

These are letters to friends and relations, or people you know well.

Structure:

The sender's address should always appear on the top left-hand corner of the page. Include telephone number and email if available

Greeting — There are several variations that can be used depending on how well you know the person: Dear Mary, Hi Mary, Greetings

Complimentary close — short comment, for example Love, Lots of love, Thanks, See you soon

Formal letters and messages need to be precise and detailed, covering all the required information. Two types of letters can be undertaken — a letter requesting information; and a reply providing it. These are sometimes known as business letters. They are written in a strictly formal style. Such letters are always written on an A4 (8" x 11") sheet of paper. They can be folded three times so that the address to which the letter is being sent can appear in the window of a business envelope. The layout is always the same.

Structure:

The senders address is put at the top left-hand side

Include telephone number and email if available

The address of the person receiving the letter goes on the left-hand side below the sender's address

The date

Greeting — Dear Sir or Madam. You can use the titles Miss, Mrs or Mr . If you know the name of the person to whom you are writing the message.

Complimentary close — Yours faithfully or Yours sincerely

Signature

Write name in block letters (this is to ensure that the person receiving the letter knows exactly who has sent it. Signatures may not be very clear)

Tips for writing good letters

Make sure that they are well written. It can be very annoying for someone to have to struggle to read handwriting. Always use your best and clearest handwriting.

Make sure all your contact details are clearly written down at the top of the letter. If they are not, then you might not get a reply. The correct address is essential.

Think about what you want to say. If necessary, make some notes on a separate sheet of paper first. This will ensure that you do not forget anything.

Think about to whom you are writing the letter. Use the right style of writing and language — formal or informal, business like or friendly.

Lay out your letter using paragraphs. This makes it easier for the reader.

Letters of invitation

Everyone likes receiving invitations. Receiving a hand written letter asking you to a party or a special event makes you feel very special.

Discuss what type of event might create a need to write letters of invitation. There are plenty of examples — birthday parties, Christmas parties, a visit to a beach with friends; going out to a farm or to the cinema, a wedding or when a new baby is christened; or simply inviting a friend to stay overnight at your house.

Choose a special event and write a letter inviting a friend. What do you need to include in the letter so that they have all the necessary information? You need to be clear on the date and the time, as well as the location. Your friend would be very upset if he or she went to the wrong place. Does he or she need to bring anything with them? Does he or she need to be collected at a set time? Will outdoor clothing be needed if the weather is bad? How will your friend reach the location of the event? Should a parent bring them or will you provide transport?

Remember to ask them to reply saying yes or no. Give a date by which you must have their reply. This is important if food and drink are being provided, or if you need to know exactly how many people are coming.

Letters of complaint

When might a letter of complaint be sent? It might be when someone has done something wrong. Sometimes people write

letters to organisations or the newspapers to complain about litter or poor service.

Letters to newspapers and magazines

These are letters that aim to pass on an opinion or a message. Examples can be easily obtained from local newspapers or from children's magazines such as DK Find Out or Aquila. They are written slightly differently to normal letters and are always addressed Dear Sir, or Dear — (name of magazine).

These are letters that are directed at a wide audience — anyone who happens to read it. The sender never gets a direct letter back through the post. Sometimes people are so interested in a letter, which has appeared in a magazine that they want to express their opinions. So, they then write a letter to the magazine giving their comments.

So, what might go into a letter to a newspaper or magazine? It might be a request — could you provide more stories about skate boarding, or nature? It might be a way of thanking people for providing help. Sometimes letters to local newspapers are used to thank people who helped find a lost dog or help after an accident; but who did not leave their names. By writing to the paper, the sender hopes that the message will reach the people concerned. Sometimes such letters are used to express opinions such as on climate change, treatment of animals, poor services, not enough buses, and human rights.

Letters of this kind need to be very precise. Arguments should be clearly made. Requests for action should be clearly indicated. From reading the letter, everyone should know exactly what the sender is asking.

A major issue is recycling and energy conservation. Everyone is trying to reduce the amount of energy we use. Look at all the reasons why energy conservation is so important. Then, write a letter to a paper or magazine saying why you believe we should avoid wasting energy. Give examples of how energy can be saved? What measures should we take in our homes or schools? Could anything more be done?

Now, let's explain the contents of letter

Sender's Address

The sender's address is usually put on the top left-hand corner of the page. The address should be complete and accurate in case the recipient of the letter wishes to get in touch with the sender for further communication.

Date

The sender's address is followed by the date just below it, i.e. on the right side of the page. This is the date on which the letter is being written. It is important in formal letters as they are often kept on record.

Receiver's Address

After leaving some space we print the receiver's address on the left side of the page. Make sure you write the official title/name/position etc of the receiver, as the first line of the address.

Greeting

This is where you greet the person you are addressing the letter to. Bear in mind that it is a formal letter, so the greeting must be respectful and not too personal. The general greetings used in formal letters are "Sir" or "Madam". If you know the name of the person the salutation may also be "Mr XYZ" or "Ms ABC". But remember you cannot address them only by their first name. It must be the full name or only their last name.

Subject

After the salutation/greeting comes the subject of the letter. In the centre of the line write 'Subject' followed by a colon. Then we sum up the purpose of writing the letter in one line. This helps the receiver focus on the subject of the letter in one glance.

Body of the Letter

This is the main content of the letter. It is either divided into three paras or two paras if the letter is briefer. The purpose of the letter should be made clear in the first paragraph itself. The tone of the content should be formal. Do not use any flowery language. Another point to keep in mind is that the letter should be concise and to the point. And always be respectful and considerate in your language, no matter the subject of your letter.

Closing the Letter

At the end of your letter, we write a complimentary closing. The words “Yours Faithfully” or “Yours Sincerely” are printed on the right side of the paper. Generally, we use the latter if the writer knows the name of the person.

Signature

Here finally you sign your name. And then write your name in block letters beneath the signature. This is how the recipient will know who is sending the letter.