



Unit: Writing
Skill 22: Correspondence
Activity B: Business Letters

Activity Skills:

Small group discussion, writing.

Leadership Skills:

Understanding the basic parts of a business letter.

Suggested Level:

Advanced

Time:

30-40 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Paper for writing.
- Pencils or pens.
- Business Letter handout.

Do Ahead:

Collect some samples of business letters that you have written or received to share as examples.

- Make copies of worksheet

Source:

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Based On:

Guide to Basic Business Letters, by Kenneth Beare,
http://esl.about.com/cs/onth/jobenglish/a/a_basbletter.htm

BACKGROUND:

Developing a business letter is different than writing a letter to a friend. There is a certain style to business writing, more brief and formal than personal correspondence. Writing a business letter may seem complicated but it is an important skill to master, especially for those in leadership roles. Once you have a basic template to follow and a little practice under your belt, anyone can write a great business letter!

The following elements are considered essential for standard business letters:

- Letterhead (or typed heading with name, address and phone number)
- Date
- Inside address
- Salutation with proper punctuation (a colon :)
- Body (text)
- Complimentary closing with proper punctuation (a comma ,)
- Signature and a typed name

Review the key parts to a business letter on the handouts.

WHAT TO DO:

Have participants divide into small groups of 3-5 people, or do as an individual exercise if you prefer. Give the groups the same situation – you are the owner of a company and did not get an order shipped to a client on time. You must apologize to the client and reassure him that his products are on the way, and that your company can serve his needs on time in the future.

Have the groups write a business letter for the situation, using the handout recommendations. Then ask each group to take 5-8 minutes to write a thank you note or letter for one of their situations. Then bring the groups together and have each group share their thank you message and why the situation warranted such a message. At the end, have the groups share their lists of situations too.

TALK IT OVER:**Reflect:**

- Was it easy or difficult to draft a business letter?
- Did you include all the basic elements?
- What kinds of phrases were helpful?
- When you look at the letter overall, does it appear professional?

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Notes:

Apply:

- What situations in your own life have required a more formal business letter?
- Have you ever received a poorly written letter? What was your impression?
- Name some situation for your own group, organization or company where a business letter was in order.

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Look up writing business letters in the library. Find 3 references on the topic and compare the recommendations they make about business letters. Is there one agreed upon standard? If there is variation, are the approaches basically the same? What conclusions can you draw from the references?

Resources And Web Links:

http://esl.about.com/cs/onthejobenglish/a/a_basbletter.htm

<http://www.cyberbee.com/science/letpart.html>