

Personal Letter Writing



With all the new technology of today, the golden age of handwritten letters may be past. But receiving a long, newsy letter is still a treat, and there are times when nothing but a mailed letter will do. Whether handwritten, printed, or typed, the standard letter format hasn't changed.

Your Home Address and the Date

If your stationery does not include your printed address, place it in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Follow one or two lines below with the date. If your address is already printed, the date is placed in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.

The Body of the Letter

The best letters will share news and information, mix good with bad news, respond to the questions asked or news shared in a previous letter, and ask about the recipient. Include only information you would be happy for others to see. It is more likely that a mailed letter will stay private; e-mailed ones can easily be forwarded inadvertently or intentionally.

Letters Best Left Unwritten

- **Woe-is-me:** A letter full of misfortune and unhappiness won't give your reader pleasure and will leave him or her worried or depressed.
- **Tell-all:** There's nothing wrong with pouring your heart out in a letter, but providing too many intimate details could eventually lead to embarrassment.
- **Gossip:** It's wrong to tell everything you know about someone's trials and tribulations, so check your impulse to share.
- **Anger:** Bitter spoken words fade away, but written words stay on a page forever. Put a letter written in anger aside before sending it. Go back later and maybe you'll soften the tone or decide not to send it.

Ending a Letter

End a letter with something positive and if you can, wind up the letter with something your correspondent can relate to.

-- The Complimentary Close --

- The preferred ending to formal social or business correspondence is "Sincerely," "Sincerely yours," "Very sincerely," or "Very sincerely yours."
- "Kind(est) regards," and "Warm(est) regards" fill a nice gap between formal and more intimate closings.
- In friendly notes, the most frequently used closings are "Cordially," "Affectionately," "Fondly," and "Love."
- "Gratefully" is used only when a benefit has been received, as when a friend has done you a favor.
- "As always" or "As ever" is useful in closing a letter to someone with whom you may not be close or haven't seen for some time.

Signatures

- Sign with your first and last name if you're writing to someone you've never met face to face.
- Put your last name in parentheses if you've only spoken with the person on the phone.
- Use your first name or nickname on letters to friends or business associates who know you.

