

Informal Letter Writing

“Letter writing is the only device for combining solitude with good company.” ~Lord Byron

Writing an informal letter might seem like an easy task because there are so few rules. The difficulty, however, lies in three areas:

- A. The appropriate level of informality for the audience.
- B. A casual and conversational tone.
- C. An interesting letter with both information and feeling.

Key Ideas

- **Know your audience!** -- write with the appropriate level of informality. You wouldn't address a close friend in the same way that you would a former professor but both would be informal letters.
- **Remember the basics!** -- just because it's an informal letter doesn't mean you can forget the traditional structures (like salutations, correct grammar and spelling, etc).
- **Be brief!** – even if you are writing to someone you haven't spoken to in a long time, you don't want to bore them with too much information.
- **Be sincere!** -- you are probably writing to someone that you have an important relationship with so while you are writing about YOU, remember to be polite and conversational.

Main Points

- Casual language (“Things are going great...”)
- Idioms (“*I’m up to my ears* in work”)
- Phrasal verbs (“Mary is *settling in* great”)
- Casual grammar (can't, don't, I'm, we're)

Format

1. Salutation: a greeting, “Dear Mary, Hi Mom!, Hey cuz!”;
2. Introduction: opening comments, including asking about the person to whom you are writing (his job, family, etc) and why you are writing;
3. Body: new paragraphs for each topic that you will introduce;
4. Conclusion: your closing remark;
5. Goodbye: a closing comment and signature;
6. *Post Script: an extra bit of information or note that you want to include*

Things to Consider

Here are some common phrases that you might find in an informal letter. Match the phrase in the column on the left to the appropriate usage in the column on the right.

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. That reminds me... | _____ a. to finish a letter |
| 2. Why don't we... | _____ b. to apologize |
| 3. I'd better get going... | _____ c. to thank the person for writing |
| 4. Thanks for your letter... | _____ d. to begin the letter |
| 5. Please let me know... | _____ e. to change the subject |
| 6. I'm really sorry... | _____ f. to ask a favor |
| 7. Love, | _____ g. before signing the letter |
| 8. Could you do something for me? | _____ h. to suggest or invite |
| 9. Write soon... | _____ i. to ask for a reply |
| 10. Did you know that... | _____ j. to ask for a response |
| 11. I'm happy to hear that... | _____ k. to share some information |
| 12. I wouldn't be surprised if... | _____ l. to introduce a good thing |
| 13. Long time no see! | _____ m. to introduce a potential outcome |
| | _____ n. a greeting |

Some opening remarks:

- questions/wishes about recent events, the person's health, etc.

Hello Mark,

How are you? I hope you're feeling better.

- a thank you to the person for their last letter, comments regarding their news, etc.

I was sorry to hear that you aren't going to...

- an apology for a delay in writing/replying

Sorry I've taken so long to put pen to paper, but...

- the reason why you are writing

The reason I'm writing is to ask you if...

Some closing remarks:

- the reason why you must end the letter

Well, that's all my news. I'd better end now, because...

- greetings to the person's family or friends

Give my best wishes to your parents.

- wishes, a promise (to write again soon), an invitation, etc.

I'll write as soon as I can and let you know about...

- a request to the person to reply soon.

Please write soon and tell me all your news.

Some goodbyes:

- "Yours truly", "Your friend", "All the best", "Take care", "See you soon", "Don't be a stranger"

Some resources for this lesson from:

http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blwrite_informalletter.htm

<http://hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Write-an-Informal-Letter>