

# Block Style Business Letters

**Unit:** Technology

**Problem Area:** Format Business Documents

**Lesson:** Block Style Business Letters

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Identify letter components.**
- 2 Format business letter layout.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Business Communication Process and Product*. 5th ed. Thompson South-Western, 2006.

Hoggatt, Jack P., Jon A. Shank, and Jerry W. Robinson. *Century 21 Computer Applications & Keyboarding*. 7th ed. Thompson South-Western, 2002.

Wise, Craig, General Clerk. U.S. Post Office, Effingham, IL. Personal interview. 2 Aug. 2006.



## ■ List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## ■ Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ addressee
- ▶ addressee notation
- ▶ attachment notation
- ▶ attention line
- ▶ blind copy
- ▶ block style
- ▶ body
- ▶ complimentary close
- ▶ copy notation
- ▶ delivery notation
- ▶ enclosure notation
- ▶ inside address
- ▶ letterhead
- ▶ mixed punctuation
- ▶ open punctuation
- ▶ postscript
- ▶ reference initials
- ▶ salutation
- ▶ second-page heading
- ▶ sentence case
- ▶ signature block
- ▶ subject line
- ▶ writer's signature

## ■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situation. A possible approach is included here.

*Ask the students if they think the format of a business letter is important. Tell them that a poorly constructed letter can reflect negatively on a business. Ask them what they would think if they received a letter that was poorly constructed*

with errors. In this lesson they will learn how to format a business letter so they can communicate with others in a professional manner.

## SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Identify letter components.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the different letter components?

- I. There are several different letter components. Each component is important in the construction of a letter. The first component of a business letter is letterhead. **Letterhead** is preprinted stationery that contains the company's name, address, and telephone number. The letterhead may include the company's fax number, logo, slogan, email address, Web site address, advertising message, etc.
  - A. The first line on a business letter is the date. The dateline is the date the letter was written. The month is spelled out with a comma separating the day and year. The dateline should appear at least one blank line below the letterhead or two inches from the top of the paper.
  - B. The next component of a letter is the delivery notation and addressee notation. Letters do not always require these components. A **delivery notation** indicates how the letter was delivered (fax transmission, Federal Express, messenger delivery, certified mail, etc.). The **addressee notation** (e.g., confidential) directs the recipient on how to handle the information in the letter (Guffey A28).
  - C. The **inside address** (also known as the letter address, mailing address, or recipient's address) is the address of the **addressee**, which is the person receiving the letter. This letter component must be included. Use a courtesy title (e.g., Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., or Professor) before a person's name in the inside address—for both the letter and the envelope. Although many women in business today favor Ms., use whatever title the addressee prefers. In some cases, the name of the addressee may be unknown. The **attention line** is used when the letter is called to the attention of a department or job title when the name of the addressee is unknown. If the inside address is a dual address, just type the intended delivery address. This is usually the post office box information.
  - D. The **salutation** is the greeting that begins with "Dear". If the letter is addressed to an individual, use that person's courtesy title and last name (e.g., Dear Mr. Mason). Add a colon (not a comma or semicolon) after the salutation. Placing punctuation after the salutation and complimentary close is called **mixed punctuation**. It is also appropriate to omit punctuation at the end of the salutation and complimentary close, which is called **open punctuation**. Do not

use an individual's full name in the salutation unless you are unsure of the gender (e.g., Dear Leslie Lanham). Every business letter will include a salutation.

1. When using an attention line, the correct salutation is "Ladies and Gentlemen" if the message is to be sent to a company's department. "Sir or Madam" may be used if the attention line is addressed to an individual position (Guffey A30).
- E. The **subject line** identifies the main topic of the letter; this is an optional letter component.
- F. The **body** is the text of the letter. Single-space the paragraphs and double-space between paragraphs. Every letter has body text.
- G. The **complimentary close** is a courtesy line that signifies the end of the writer's message. The close may be formal (Very truly yours) or informal (Sincerely or Cordially). Use **sentence case**, which means to capitalize just the first character of the component when typing a complimentary close. Place a comma after the close (mixed punctuation) or leave it without punctuation (open punctuation). Letters will always include a complimentary close.
- H. The **signature block** is the writer's typed name and job title. The writer's typed name and optional identification appear three or four blank lines below the complimentary close. The combination of name, title, and organization information should be arranged to achieve a balanced look. The name and title may appear on the same line separated by a comma or on separate lines single-spaced. A business letter will always include a signature block.
- I. A **writer's signature** is proof that the writer agrees to the content of the letter. The signature should be written in the same color of ink as the letter. A courtesy title is not included in the signature. Begin the signature below the complimentary close and above the writer's typed name. Make sure the signature is placed in vertical alignment with the left margin of the complimentary close. A writer should carefully proofread the letter's content before signing, especially if someone else typed the letter. A distributed letter will always have a writer's signature.
- J. The **reference initials** are the initials of the typist. Reference initials are used so that an organization or individual may access the letter's filename for error corrections or future amendments. If used, the initials of the typist are typed one blank line below the writer's name and title. The reference initials are lowercased and include the first, middle, and last name initial.
- K. The **enclosure notation** is used when some other document besides the letter is sent in the same envelope. An **attachment notation** is used when a document is physically attached to the letter. An enclosure notation reminds the typist to insert the enclosure in the envelope, and it reminds the recipient to look for the enclosed or attached document. The United States Postal Service (USPS) discourages sending mail that is stapled or paper clipped. Not only can these envelopes be torn and disfigured, the USPS equipment can also be damaged. If it is absolutely necessary to use staples or paper clips in the mailing, send the letter in a thicker, cardboard-type mailing envelope (Wise).

- L. The **copy notation** indicates that other individuals or organizations have received copies of the correspondence. A copy notation is placed one blank line below the reference initials or enclosure notation, if they are used. A colon following the notation is optional. Use cc for carbon copy (also known as courtesy copy in emails), pc for photocopy, bc or bcc for **blind copy**, which means the writer does not want the recipient to know the letter has been sent to a third party.
- M. A **postscript** is an optional message added to a letter as the last item on the page. A postscript may be used to emphasize information in the body or to add a personal message to a business letter. Postscripts are double-spaced below the reference initials or enclosure notation if one is used. Block or indent a postscript to match paragraphs in the body. The postscript abbreviation “P.S.” is not necessary.
- N. A **second-page heading** is a standard format used when a letter exceeds one page. When a letter extends beyond one page, use plain paper of the same quality and color as the first page. Identify the second and succeeding pages with a heading consisting of the name of the addressee, the page number, and the date. Start one inch from the top of the page followed by two blank lines to separate them from the continuing text. Avoid using a second page if you have only one line on the complimentary close and signature block to fill that page.

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–A to illustrate the components of a business letter.*

## **Objective 2:** Format business letter layout.

**Anticipated Problem:** How do you format a business letter layout?

- II. **Block style** means all lines begin at the left margin. The margins of a business letter are 2" top margin and 1" side margins.
  - A. Type the letter using correct line spacing.
    1. Type the date and leave three blank lines.
    2. If there is an addressee or delivery notation, type it at this location and leave two blank lines.
    3. Type the inside address single-spaced. Start with the addressee’s name or attention line. Type the street address and hit enter. Then type the city followed by a comma, spacebar, the two-state abbreviation code, spacebar, and the ZIP code (i.e., Fairfield, IL 62837).
    4. Double-space after the inside address and type the salutation followed by a colon.
    5. The letter may be enhanced with a subject line or reference line.
    6. Double-space after the salutation and type the body. Single-space the paragraphs and double-space between paragraphs.

7. Double-space after the last paragraph and type a complimentary close followed by a comma.
8. Leave three blank lines after the complimentary close to allow room for the signature. Then type the signature block.
9. Double-space after the signature block and type the reference initials if the writer is not the typist.
10. If another document is added to the mailing, double-space below the reference initials and type an enclosure notation.
11. A copy notation, if needed, is double-spaced below the reference initials or enclosure notation.
12. A postscript, if needed, is double-spaced below the reference initials or the last notation. A postscript is generally the last item on the page.
13. Perform a spell check and proofread the letter.
14. Once the letter is proofread again for content, the writer should sign the letter in black ink in the space provided between the complimentary close and signature block.

*Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–B to illustrate the format of a business letter. Use LS–A to practice formatting a business letter.*

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used in the review/summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheet to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### **Part One: Matching**

1. c
2. e
3. d
4. a
5. b

## **Part Two: Short Answer**

1. company name, company address, company phone number, Web site, fax number
2. top margin is 2" and side margins are 1"

## **Part Three: Completion**

1. Block style
2. writer's signature
3. complimentary close
4. salutation
5. inside address

# Block Style Business Letters

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- a. reference initials
- b. blind copy
- c. postscript
- d. second-page heading
- e. copy notation

- \_\_\_\_ 1. An optional message added to a letter as the last item on the page
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Indicates that other individuals or organizations have received copies of the correspondence
- \_\_\_\_ 3. A standard format used when a letter exceeds one page
- \_\_\_\_ 4. The initials of the typist
- \_\_\_\_ 5. The writer does not want the recipient to know the letter has been sent to a third party

## ► Part Two: Short Answer

**Instructions:** Complete the following.

- 1. List three items included on letterhead.
  
- 2. What are the margins of a business letter?





### ► Part Three: Completion

**Instructions:** Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ means all lines begin at the left margin.
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is proof that the writer agrees to the content of the letter.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a courtesy line that signifies the end of the writer's message.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the greeting that begins with "Dear."
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the address of the addressee.

# MAJOR COMPONENTS OF A BUSINESS LETTER

**Letterhead**

**J K O Business Solutions**  
*Our Block Training Method Helps You Learn Software Fast!*  
 1210 E. Florin Dr. ■ Effingham, IL 62401-1210 ■ (217) 342-4400 ■ <http://www.jko.biz>

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August 5, 20—

Ms. Thelma Wilkerson  
 Human Resource Director  
 Abbott-Cottrill Enterprises  
 532 Plum St.  
 Charleston, IL 61920

**Inside address**

Dear Ms. Wilkerson:

**Salutation**

BLOCK STYLE BUSINESS LETTER

**Subject line**

This letter illustrates a block style business letter, about which you asked. All typed lines begin at the left margin. The date is usually placed two inches from the top edge of the paper or one blank line below the last line of the letterhead, whichever position is lower. Side margins can be set one inch for longer letters (more than 200 words) to one and a half inches for shorter letters.

This letter also shows mixed punctuation. A colon follows the salutation, and a comma follows the complimentary close. Open punctuation is seldom seen today, so we do not recommend using it. If a subject line is included, it appears two lines below the salutation. The word SUBJECT is optional. Most readers will recognize a statement in this position as the subject without an identifying label.

The complimentary close appears one blank line below the end of the last paragraph. Please note that the reference initials are double-spaced below the signature block. If you place additional material in the envelope, you need to add an enclosure notation directly below the reference initials. I hope this letter answers your questions; please contact me if you need further formatting instructions. My e-mail address is printed on the enclosed business card.

Sincerely,

**Complimentary close**

Debbie Lohman  
 Software Consultant

**Writer's name and title**

ptl

**Reference initials**

Enclosure

**Enclosure notation**

# FORMAT OF A BUSINESS LETTER



*Our Block Training Method Helps You Learn Software Fast!*

1210 E. Florin Dr. ■ Effingham, IL 62401-1210 ■ (217) 342-4400 ■ <http://www.jko.biz>

August 5, 20— (2" from the top of page)

(3 blank lines—quadruple space)

Ms. Thelma Wilkerson  
Human Resource Director  
Abbott-Cottrill Enterprises  
532 Plum St.  
Charleston, IL 61920

(double space)

Dear Ms. Wilkerson:

(double space)

BLOCK STYLE BUSINESS LETTER

(double space)

This letter illustrates a block style business letter, about which you asked. All typed lines begin at the left margin. The date is usually placed two inches from the top edge of the paper or one blank line below the last line of the letterhead, whichever position is lower. Side margins can be set one inch for longer letters (more than 200 words) to one and a half inches for shorter letters.

(double space)

This letter also shows mixed punctuation. A colon follows the salutation, and a comma follows the complimentary close. Open punctuation is seldom seen today, so we do not recommend using it. If a subject line is included, it appears two lines below the salutation. The word SUBJECT is optional. Most readers will recognize a statement in this position as the subject without an identifying label.

(double space)

The complimentary close appears one blank line below the end of the last paragraph. Please note that the reference initials are double-spaced below the signature block. If you place additional material in the envelope, you need to add an enclosure notation directly below the reference initials.

I hope this letter answers your questions; please contact me if you need further formatting instructions. My e-mail address is printed on the enclosed business card.

(double space)

Sincerely,

(quadruple space)

Debbie Lohman  
Software Consultant

(double space)

ptl

(double space)

Enclosure

# Format a Business Letter

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to format a business letter.

## Objectives

1. Format a business letter

## Materials

- ◆ computer with word processing software

## Procedure

1. Use the following information to format a business letter:

- ◆ Company information:

Community Foundation Association  
P.O. Box 218  
Cedar Hills, CA 52249

- ◆ Inside address:

Tiffany M. Culler  
4445 State Route 67  
Batson, CA 52249

- ◆ Body text:

The organizational meeting of the new board of directors has been scheduled for Tuesday, November 20th. The meeting will be held in the Baker Room of the Grant Street Hotel beginning at 2:00 p.m.



On behalf of the Nominating/Elections Committee, it is my privilege to welcome you to our company. We look forward to your financial expertise in helping meet the goal for our future annual fund drive and identify those projects and activities in the company that are most in need of financial assistance.

Other issues that may be addressed include fund safety, salary issues, security deployment, and fund seminars. We look forward to your collaboration and vision for success. I have enclosed an agenda for your review.

◆ Writer:

Paul Harris, President

2. Include an appropriate salutation and complimentary close.
3. Add an enclosure notation.
4. Add your reference initials.
5. Proofread and correct all errors.
6. Print a copy for the instructor to review.