

how the message or photo will reflect on you months or years from now.

- **Would you say face to face what you've written?** Imagine saying what you've written to the person your message is about or is addressed to. If you wouldn't say it, don't post it.

14b Writing business letters

When you write for business, you are addressing busy people who want to see quickly why you are writing and how they should respond to you. Follow these general guidelines:

- State your purpose right at the start.
- Be straightforward, clear, concise, objective, and courteous.
- Observe conventions of grammar and usage, which make your writing clear and impress your reader with your care.

1 Business letter format

Business letters sent on paper or by e-mail have similar formats, with differences for the different media.

Letters on paper

Use either unlined white paper measuring 8½" × 11" or letterhead stationery with your address preprinted at the top of the sheet. Print the letter single-spaced (with double spacing between elements) on one side of a sheet. The sample on the next page shows a common format.

- **The return-address heading gives your address and the date.** Do not include your name. If you are using letterhead, add only the date.
- **The inside address shows the name, title, and complete address of the person you are writing to.**
- **The salutation greets the addressee.** Whenever possible, address your letter to a specific person. (Contact the company or department to ask whom to address.) If you can't find a person's name, then use a job title (*Dear Human Resources Manager*, *Dear Customer Service Manager*) or use a general salutation (*Dear Smythe Shoes*). Use *Ms.* as the title for a woman.

- **The body contains the substance.** Instead of indenting the first line of each paragraph, double-space between paragraphs.
- **The close should reflect the level of formality in the salutation:** *Respectfully*, *Cordially*, *Yours truly*, and *Sincerely* are more formal closes; *Regards* and *Best wishes* are less formal.
- **The signature has two parts:** your name typed four lines below the close, and your handwritten signature in the space between.

Sentence Parts and Patterns

Clarity and Style

Spelling and Mechanics

Punctuation