



14.3: Writing Business Letters

14.3 Describe how to write effective and appropriate business letters.

Business letters are standard communication formats that are important and common in the workplace. As a leader, you will likely need to communicate with those outside of your organization—for example, with clients or those in other organizations. Being able to apply the skills discussed previously to business letters is important and valuable.







14.3.1: Correspondence

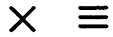
Correspondence refers to business letters sent to customers, coworkers, superiors, and subordinates. Because business correspondence often is more personal than formal proposals and reports, it should generally be written in a conversational style.

Develop Goodwill

Goodwill is a positive perception of the author on the part of the audience. A good way to build goodwill is to keep your correspondence-audience focus. Put simply, adapt to your reader. Rather than saying “We need to see a receipt before *we* can process a return or exchange of the merchandise,” say “You may receive  a full refund or exchange of the merchandise if *you* mail or fax a  receipt.” The two sentences say essentially the same thing, but the focus in the second sentence is on the needs of the customer. In this case you could build even more goodwill by sending an acknowledgment letter letting the person know that the receipt arrived and thanking the person for being prompt.

Include Standard Elements of Correspondence

Although the general appearance and format of correspondence may vary, following is a list of elements present in most business correspondence. Use this list as a guideline when deciding what to include in your business letter. **Table 14.2** illustrates a sample business letter.



14.3.2: Complaint Letters

There will be times when you are not satisfied with a product or service and believe some restitution is in order. A *complaint letter* expresses dissatisfaction with a product or service. A letter of complaint can be an effective method for resolving a dispute, if it is written with the appropriate tone and does not sound as though you are being accusatory or whining. You might even get more than you expected. Many businesses appreciate knowing when something is going wrong, and they will do what they can to create goodwill with a dissatisfied customer.

The following suggestions will help you write a letter of complaint that's likely to be read and acted on.⁶⁵³

- **Complain only when you feel it is justified.** Write letters of complaint only after exhausting all other options. In other words, if you're unhappy with a product or service you purchased, give the salesperson an opportunity to fix the problem before forwarding a letter of complaint to the corporate office.
- **Address the letter to the person who has the authority to fix the problem.** If your complaint is with a local business, address the letter to the owner or manager. If you're dealing with a local branch of a large corporation, you'll need to find out whether your complaint should be sent to the local branch or if the problem was created by policies set by a corporate office. Searching company websites, annual reports, or online



14.4: Writing Business Documents

14.4 Illustrate procedures and formats for different types of business documents.

As a leader, you will be responsible for organizing and developing a number of business documents, including memorandums (more commonly known as memos), progress and activity reports, sales proposals, and formal reports. This section outlines the basic components of each type of document as well as considerations for their appropriate use. The sample documents provided are only guidelines; organizations may have their own procedures and formats for the various types of business documents.





14.4.1: Memos

A *memo* is a short and usually informal written communication to others within an organization. Memos are used as reminders or to pass along information. Memos can be as simple as a sentence written on a sticky note, but they are usually printed on company letterhead. An example of a memo appears in **Figure 14.3**. Although there is no standard format for memos, they should generally contain at least some form of each of the following elements:⁶⁵⁶

Figure 14.3:
Sample Memo

<
TRH Incorporated
>

TO: Kay Marquez, Service Manager
FROM: Stephanie Ramos, Local Store Marketer
DATE: May 17, 20XX
SUBJECT: Opportunity for local ad campaign

TRH has been offered an opportunity to participate in a local advertising campaign in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's "Local Tastes" program.

"Local Tastes" is an annual program featuring community restaurants and other businesses, including a two-week mailer campaign and events at local stores. This campaign culminates in a well-attended day-long event at the convention center featuring products from each participating business.

Participating businesses will be featured on a front page of the mailer, get a 30-second spot with a local news outlet, and be given a booth with banner at the "Local Tastes" event on July 3.

It would be an excellent opportunity to get the company recognized in the

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14.4.2: Progress and Activity Reports

A *progress report* gives updates on the status of a project. Most project reports are generated by a company that has been contracted to do a particular job or provide a service. In such cases, it is appropriate to submit project reports at regular intervals to communicate the project's status and keep all personnel on task.⁶⁵⁷ Although the format for project reports varies depending on the project, the policies of the organization providing the report, and the requirements of the client or customer, all reports should maintain the same format for any particular project. Progress reports may contain information about whether a project is within budget. If you anticipate going over budget, mention that and discuss some possible reasons and solutions. A progress report should also include information about how the work is progressing—what has been completed as well as what is anticipated. If you expect you may not complete the work on schedule, discuss this in the progress report and explain what arrangements need to be made to complete the project. **Figure 14.4** shows an example of a progress report.

Figure 14.4:
Sample Progress Report

Date: August 17, 20XX
 To: Juan Brown, Managing Partner, TRH Inc.
 From: Mike Caro, NuSheen Services
 Subject: Progress Report for July 1–29, 20XX

Dear Mr. Brown,

I am happy to say the parking lot and building refinishing project is on schedule. At this point we are somewhat over budget in terms of materials, but I am confident we



14.4.3: Sales Proposals

A *sales proposal* is a document intended to persuade possible clients of their need for your product or service. An effective sales proposal demonstrates to prospective clients that they have a problem and your product or service will help to solve that problem. The writer of a sales proposal must first determine the selling points, or the most attractive features of the product or service, and then construct a document that clearly illustrates these points. The proposal should highlight the specific benefits that customers will receive from the use of the product or service. For example, the owner of a landscaping business might notice that a local restaurant is surrounded by dry dead grass and overgrown shrubbery. In a proposal offering landscaping services, the business owner would try to persuade the restaurant manager of the appeal of a well-kept, lush, green exterior and convince him that landscaping could increase his bottom line.

Keep in mind that in many states, sales proposals are *legally binding documents*, which means that any incentives or benefits offered in the sales proposal must be reasonable and must be delivered as promised.⁶⁵⁸ It is not uncommon for organizations to be sued over failing to deliver on the promises offered in a persuasive sales proposal.⁶⁵⁹

If you choose to use a former client's testimony or image in a sales proposal, make sure you have permission to do so and that you have not fabricated the testimony. For example, if the landscaping business owner wanted to include comments from current or former customers about the quality of her company's landscaping work in her sales proposal, she would first need to get the customer's permission in writing to use the testimony or pictures of the



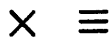
14.4.4: Formal Reports

A *formal report* is a highly detailed and comprehensive report on an ongoing project or a completed project that is often coauthored by several writers. For example, if you were implementing new procedures in your organization over a 12-month period, you might send out a status report midway through the implementation process to those affected by the changes. Once the implementation process was completed, you would send out a final report detailing the process and the effectiveness of the implementation. Reports are more strictly formatted than most other forms of business correspondence, and the format varies according to company policies. Reports are divided into three main parts: the front matter, the body, and the back matter. Each part contains several elements whose order and length vary according to company recommendations. Following are basic descriptions of the components of a formal report.⁶⁶⁰

Front Matter

Front matter consists of those aspects of a report that come at the beginning and serve to prepare the reader for the main information. The report title, the authors' names, lists of the report's contents, and a brief summary should all be a part of the front matter.

- **TITLE PAGE.** A title page contains the full title of the report, a list of the writers' or researchers' names, date(s) of the report, the organizational affiliations of the writers, and the organization to which the report is being submitted.
- **ABSTRACT.** An abstract is a summary (two or three paragraphs) that





Summary: Writing for Business

14.1: Report some of the factors that make good business writing.

Problem-solution development begins with a description of a problem and moves on to discuss possible solutions or a proposed solution to the problem.

Chronological or sequential organizational pattern begins with the first in a series of events or steps and moves on to the second, third, and so on. This organization pattern allows you to report on events or steps in the order in which they occurred or will occur.

Priority development focuses on the most urgent or important information first,  moves on to less important or urgent information. 

General-to-specific development is a format that allows you to begin with the big picture and move on to specific details. When preparing a sales proposal, for example, you may want to start by discussing the overall goals and move on toward the specifics of the product or service you are offering.

14.2: Examine how appropriate use of technology and email at the workplace enhances the image of the organization.

Be concise by keeping messages brief and to the point. Correct writing doesn't have to be lengthy. It's also important to use proper letter case. Using all capital letters gives the impression you're shouting; using all lowercase letters gives the impression you're either whispering or lazy.