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Anatomy of a Business Letter

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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Business letters have many purposes and recipients. Despite variations in tone and style, the basic parts of a business letter remain standard throughout most business correspondence. This article outlines the elements found in standard business letters today, in order, as well as their modern format.

1. Heading.

Assuming you are using company letterhead, your full address will already be on the page. Add the date two spaces below the last line of printed copy. If you are using blank paper, add your full address and the date in the heading. Align the heading, and all paragraphs, with the left margin(which should be at least one inch wide).

Anatomy of a Business Letter

Example:

21 Carson Parkway
Boulder, CO 80111
December 3, 2006

2. Inside address.

Include the recipient's full name, title, and address two spaces below the date. Align it with the left margin.

Example:

Conner T. Walker
2345 Sunrise Avenue

Denver, CO 80555

3. Salutation.

Two spaces below the inside address, and also aligned with the left margin, place your salutation, or greeting. If you are on a first name basis with the recipient, use her/his first name followed by a colon. If you are writing a more formal letter, use a personal title (Ms., Mr., or Dr.) followed by the person's last name and a colon. Use Mr. for men, and Ms. for women. Never use Mrs. or Miss unless a woman has specifically expressed a preference. If you are not sure if the recipient is male or female, use a salutation that is appropriate to the letter context.

Examples:

Mr. Yates:

Ms. Dickinson:

Dear Customer:

Dear Publishing Manager:

4. Body

The body of the letter should begin two spaces below the salutation; all paragraphs should be aligned to the left margin. Single space within paragraphs and double space between them.

If your letter continues onto a second (or higher) page, leave at least two lines of text on the next page before the closing. Do not go onto another page just for the closing; this is bad form. If necessary, change the font

size or margin width to make it fit onto one page.

5. Closing

Place the closing two spaces below the last line of the body. Use a standard closing such as Sincerely or Best regards. Capitalize only the first word, and follow the closing with a comma. Four spaces below, type your full name, also aligned with the closing at the left margin. Finally, sign your name in the space between the closing expression and your typed name.

6. Additional Information

Sometimes a business letter requires you to add the typist's initials, an enclosure notification, or a note that other people are receiving the same letter. Any of this information goes two spaces below the last line of the closing in a long letter, four spaces below in a very short letter.

The typist's initials follow the writer's initials, separated by a slash. The writer's initials go in capital letters, while the typist's are lowercase.

Example: LEA/lak or LEA/ald

If the writer and the typist are the same person, no initials are needed.

If you are sending material along with the letter, such as an invoice or report, indicate this with an enclosure notification. When you use this, you must refer to the enclosures in your letter. Abbreviate or describe the enclosure(s).

Examples:

Enc.

Encs.

Enclosure: Report findings

Lastly, if you are sending the same letter to more than one person, notify your recipients with a copy notation. This is abbreviated "cc:" and followed by the recipients' names.

Example:

cc: Linda Alexander
Janna Bree Smith
Emily Lane

7. Formatting.

Finally, format your letter so it is easy to scan. Center the letter on the page both vertically and horizontally so that plenty of white space surrounds your text. When using your company's letterhead, remember to format your margins inside the printed material.

If a letter is very short, consider double spacing the entire letter. Also, you may add spaces between paragraphs, the salutation, etc., if it provides for a fuller appearance and enhances the overall "look" of the letter.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander writes marketing copy for nonprofits and other businesses. Contact her

today to get your free consultation!<http://www.write2thepointcom.commailto:lalexander@write2thepointcom.com>Because 9 other people are willing to help build your e-zine list, for free, click now.<http://www.subscriptionrocket.com/cgi-bin/r.cgi?r=1618>

Lawsuit Anatomy

By Frederick Graves, Esq.

Anatomy of a Lawsuit

Learning the anatomy of civil lawsuits is as easy as spelling "CAT".

Complaint – Answer – Trial

It's as simple as that!

Master this simple truth and you will soon be operating successfully in court.

Plaintiffs file complaints.

Defendants file answers.

Judges examine the facts and law at trial to decide who wins.

Anatomy of a Business Letter

It's not difficult if you keep these three steps in mind.

Every lawsuit has this same fundamental anatomy.

Complaint. Answer. Trial.

If you can spell "CAT", you can master the basics. C = Complaint ... Where the case begins, when the plaintiff complains. A = Answer ... Where the defendant responds to the plaintiff's complaint. T = Trial ... Where the judge (or jury) decides the final verdict. After the plaintiff files his complaint, the defendant may file a flurry of motions that seek to have the complaint stricken or dismissed so he need not answer.

If the flurry of motions fails, the defendant must answer the complaint.

Once the defendant is compelled to answer the complaint (and sometimes before) both parties are permitted to engage in discovery of evidence procedures, i.e., to demand production of documents and things, to require the other side to admit facts and law under oath, to ask relevant questions of anyone, to put evidence on the public record, and to attempt to settle the case and avoid the expense, delay, and uncertainty of going to trial.

If the parties cannot settle their dispute during the discovery phase, the court must examine the evidence, hear testimony, consider arguments of law, and render its final judgment.

It's just that simple.

By knowing this, you can write a powerful complaint or avoid filing an answer by moving the court to dismiss or strike the complaint or require a confusing or poorly worded complaint to be re-written. You can get the evidence you need with effective discovery tools, getting facts into evidence, demanding your rights, and forcing the court to do what's right ... according to law.

The anatomy of a lawsuit is no more complicated than this. CAT. By knowing the basics you strengthen your case.

Resolve conflicts peaceably, according to the rules that control both judges and lawyers in our courts.

Attorney Frederick Graves created Jurisdictionary (

) in 1997 to provide

self-help for those who either cannot afford a lawyer or aren't sure they can trust the lawyer they have. Learn more at

Lawsuit Anatomy

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