

PLEASE POST

The Ohio Academy of Science
100 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43210
Phone or FAX (614) 486-2228

January 10, 1991

Mr. John W. Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Nashville Corporation
123 Easy Street
Millsville, OH 41234

Dear Mr. Smith:

This is the first line of the first paragraph. It should state the purpose of the letter or the reason for writing. This may be the only paragraph that gets read; be brief and clear. Write and rewrite until you get it right.

This is the second paragraph. Most letters have more than one paragraph. Although your letter should be more exciting to read than this one, it will not be well received unless it has all of the essential elements of a standard business letter: heading, date, inside address, salutation, body or text, complimentary closing, your handwritten signature, and your name typed below your signature.

Although there are variations to these basic elements, including additional parts for special purposes, you can spend the rest of your life happily writing standard business letters if you get these basics right: now.

I'm closing this letter now so that I can demonstrate the final elements of a letter.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.

Sincerely,
[Signature]
John W. Elliott
Chief Executive Officer

LEE:hpi

Letterhead or typed heading

Date

Body (Text)

Signature

Complimentary closing

Typed name

Professional Correspondence for Physicists

Celia M. Elliott
University of Illinois
cmelliott@illinois.edu

HOW TO WRITE A BUSINESS LETTER

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Include all elements of a formal business letter

Letterhead

Subject:

Closing, Signature Title

Date

Inside Address

Salutation:

Body

Print your letter on formal letterhead



Department of Physics
1110 West Green Street
Urbana, IL 61801-2080 USA

CELIA MATHEWS ELLIOTT

3808 Deerfield Drive
Champaign, IL 61822-9773 · +1.217.244.7725
celia.elliott@gmail.com

**Use “company”
letterhead only for
official business (*not*
job applications**

**Use only if you are
acting as an agent of
your company**

**For personal business,
make up your own
letterhead**

**Include your complete
contact information**

Put the date immediately below the letterhead

CELIA MATHEWS ELLIOTT

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celia.elliott@gmail.com

March 23, 2019

Next comes the “inside address”— same information as the envelope

CELIA MATHEWS ELLIOTT

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celia.elliott@gmail.com

March 23, 2019

**Professor Dale J. Van Harlingen
Department of Physics
Loomis Laboratory of Physics
1110 West Green Street
Urbana, IL 61801-3080 USA**

Put an informative subject line next

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March 23, 2019

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Invitation to speak at Columbia University

After the subject line comes the “salutation”

“Dear” [Title] [Surname]:

What if you’re not sure of the person’s title?

If the person works at a university,
address him or her as

Dear **Professor** [Surname]:

If the person works at a national lab or a private
company, address him or her as

Dear **Dr.** [Surname]:

Salutation Quiz:

Dear Elliott:

Dear Celia Mathews Elliott:

Dear Celia,

Dear Professor Celia Elliott:

Greetings!

All are incorrect!
(and some may
really annoy the
recipient).

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 04, 2016 8:59 PM
To: Elliott, Celia M <cmelliot@illinois.edu>; DeMarco, Brian Leeds <bdemarco@illinois.edu>
Subject: PHYS 496 - HW 5

Hey Guys,

Attached is HW5.

Let me know what you think,

Don’t address a professional woman
old enough to be your grandmother as
“Hey Guys”

What if I don't know the name of the person to whom the letter is sent?

Dear Selection Committee:

Dear Colleagues:

Dear Human Resources Officer:

Dear Customer Service Representative:

~~**Dear Sir or Madam:**~~ **dated!**

~~**To whom it may concern:**~~ **trite and tacky!**

Better: Do the work and find out the name

Use gender-neutral language

Structure your letter as follows:

State immediately why you are writing—first sentence!

Add additional information, explanations, examples in the body of the letter

Close with a specific statement of what you want the recipient to do—give a specific deadline if appropriate

Tell the recipient how best to get in touch with you for follow-up questions

For most letters, limit to one page

Tone is important!

Convey sincerity and respect

**Use appropriate professional language—no slang,
no jokiness, no inappropriate familiarity**

**If you're asking somebody to do something,
present the benefit for complying—write from
the recipient's point of view**

Professional \neq stuffy, legalistic, high-falutin'

Use a standard closing

Use one of the following phrases:

**Very truly yours,
Sincerely yours,
Respectfully yours,**

Follow the closing with a comma (,)

Leave four blank lines for your signature

**Sign the letter in blue ink
Write neatly**

**After the blank lines, on one or two lines,
type your name (and title, if any)**

What about email?

Formality depends on the purpose and recipient

**For business email, use a formal salutation,
at least for the first interaction**

**Include all elements of a business letter except
the date and inside address**

Write a meaningful, informative subject line

Keep emails short and to the point

General email rules:

**Don't use your company's email for purely
personal business—that includes job hunting**

**Set up your "from" line with your full name
(no nicknames)**

**Create a signature line in a standard font that
includes your complete contact information**

**Don't use backgrounds, embedded images, or
FROU-FROU fonts**

Think before you hit "Reply All" or "Forward"

Proofread everything before you send it

Rules for email subject lines:

**Make them explicit and informative—no teases
or cutesiness**

Be concise (<10 words)

Frontload key words

**If the message requires action or has a deadline,
put it in the subject line**

**Don't put the subject line in all caps
(THE READER WILL THINK IT IS SPAM)**

**Don't write "See Attachment"
(the reader will think you're a virus spreader)**

To recap:

**Regardless of the medium or the message,
present yourself as a serious professional**

**Don't use company letterhead or the company
server for non-company business**

**Make your message concise, logically organized,
and explicit**

Provide complete contact information

Proofread before you send



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<http://physics.illinois.edu/people/Celia/>