

Letter Perfect - How to write a first-class business letter

By Annette Richmond

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Who's responsible for composing your company's correspondence? If you're not smiling, it must be you. While many would rather have a root canal, writing a letter doesn't have to be intimidating. All it takes to write first-class letters is a little practice, also known as developing your writing style, and some careful proofreading.

While writing style is somewhat of an intangible, certain rules do apply. One of the biggest mistakes people make is falling business-ease trap. We've all received letters to Sir or Madame, where we are told enclosed please find and are thanked in advance for our cooperation. A letter from you should sound like you. You would never say things like enclosed please find or as per why write them?

Try to organize your letter logically, making smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs. Capture your reader's attention by keeping your writing fresh, interesting and friendly. Stay away from being too hard sell or too cutesy. Also, consider the tone of your letter. For example, a letter to a favored client should sound different than one to a supplier you barely know.

Always use language that is easy to understand. If you need to look -up every word in the dictionary, chances are your reader will too. Keep your letter clear and concise. Avoid rambling. You know those sentences, the ones that go on and on and on forever, with multiple phrases, connected by commas, that make your reader lose track of what you are trying to say. See what I mean?

A few final notes. Before mailing your perfect letter, make sure it looks professional (block letter is the format most often used in business). And proofread, proofread, proofread. Your letter must be free of errors: good grammar, no typos, no incorrect spelling, etc. If possible, have someone else read your letter. Make sure they understand what your letter is trying to say. And ask them to double-check for errors.

Essentially, all business correspondence is a sales tool. Every letter you write represents you and your company. And you want to present both in the best light possible.

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