

## Letters, Envelopes, and Printers

*Speaker: Shirley Reid*

### Letters

In an office setting, you're going to be writing a lot of letters. Sometimes they'll be ones that you have composed, or ones that have been written out, or have been dictated, for you to type. Be sure to follow an acceptable letter style when you are typing these letters. There are four different letter styles being introduced initially in this section. Your company may have a style that is how they prepare their letters—it may be totally different than the letter styles being presented today, and if so, you'll follow the company's preferences. Personally, when I prepare a letter, I prefer the block style. Everything is at the left margin—no paragraphs are tabbed, nothing begins at center. The block style is faster and easier. The first example on the Letters handout is a block style letter.

**1. Block Style Letter:** Typically a block style letter will have “open” punctuation (but that isn't a requirement). “Open” punctuation means that after the salutation (i.e. Dear Ms. Miller), there is no mark of punctuation. After the complimentary closing (Sincerely yours), there is also no mark of punctuation.

Letters may also have “mixed” punctuation. For mixed punctuation, there is a colon ( : ) after the salutation (NEVER a comma), and a comma after the complimentary closing.

The letters that are being introduced are “business” letters and you would assume they would be printed on letterhead stationery. Therefore, there is no address at the top of the letter, the date is the first item on the page. Be sure to always write out the month name on a letter, not the number (i.e. “September,” not “9”). After the date on the letter, if you have a special notation such as a mailing instruction, you'd place that notation a double space below the date, and in all capital letters. The example on the handout has “OVERNIGHT MAIL” – you might also see PRIORITY, INSURED, OR CERTIFIED. These are “mailing” instructions—what you might tell the post office for how to mail the document.

After the special notation, there would be another double space (a double space is two enters, leaving one blank line). Then, you are ready for the inside address. Without a special notation, you would QS (quad space—or four enters) after the date, before typing the inside address.

The inside address: think “bottom up” for that inside address. The bottom line gets the piece of mail to the right town, state, and zip code. Always put a comma between the city and state, and always use the two-letter state abbreviations. The second line from the bottom of the address would be the mailing address, then the third line up would be the building at that address, what company is at the building, then the top line would be either an attention line (with a person's name, or just Attention Billing Manager), or just a person's name.

Golden rules that must be followed on the inside address: (1) always use a courtesy title on the inside address...i.e. Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc., (2) always use the two-letter state abbreviation, and (3) assemble the address from the bottom up.

The next part of a letter that might be used is a Reference Line...what is this letter regarding? A reference line would include RE: and then a brief statement to introduce the letter's content. Sometimes, there might be a Reference line and/or a Subject line. To keep those letter parts straight for placement on the letter, think the alphabet. **R**eference, **S**alutation, and **S**ubject are in alphabetical order. A reference line is a double space below the inside address, and a double space above the salutation. A subject line is a double space below the salutation, and a double space above the body of the letter. Without a reference line and/or a subject line, the spacing would just be double space before and after the salutation.

For the salutation, you might want to use "Ladies and Gentlemen" if the inside address doesn't name a specific individual, i.e. Attention Billing Manager. You could also assemble a standard salutation if you know the individual to whom you are addressing the letter. That standard salutation would include the word "Dear," courtesy title (Mr.), and last name (Brown). Don't include the individual's first name! DO NOT EVER use To Whom It May Concern!

On the Subject line, the example shows all capital letters. That would be correct if the word "Subject" isn't included. If you include "Subject," you could type the subject in initial capital letters (Information On Letters), or use all capital letters.

Body of Letter: The body of the letter is single spaced, with a double space between paragraphs. Because the first example is a block style letter, each paragraph begins at the left margin – they are not indented, or tabbed.

After the body of the letter and a double space below the last paragraph is the complimentary closing. Again, it is at the left margin. There are several "complimentary closings" that are accepted in business. Sincerely is common, you might also use others such as "Sincerely yours" or "Very truly yours" etc. If you use a closing that is more than one word, only the first word is capitalized.

Below the complimentary close, there may be times where the company would want its name to be included. If that is your employer's expectation, you'd type the company name a double space below the complimentary closing, and it would be in all capital letters.

After the company name, you'd enter four times (and you'd also enter four times after the complimentary closing if there isn't a company name), and then you'd type the writer's name and his or her title. For the writer's name, notice on the example sheet, that Samuel Jones's title of Director is written below his name. You could also put a comma after Samuel Jones, and include his title on the same line. The placement of the job title depends on the length of the person's name and/or the length of his or her job title.

A double space below the writer, are the initials for the typist. They would be placed at the left margin and would be typed lower case. The first letter of your initials will automatically capitalize. If you go back and select that letter and retype a lower case letter, it'll remain lower case.

Below the typist's initials, would be the word "enclosure" (if there is one...you'll be responsible for knowing whether something is being enclosed with the letter...read the body of the letter!). After "enclosure," you can type a colon and then name the enclosure, or the word "enclosure" can stand alone. The enclosure notation helps to make sure that you, as the typist, remember to include the enclosure, and the recipient of the letter knows to look for the enclosure.

A double space below the enclosure notation, you might include a "c" notation, which means "copy." This indicates that someone else, besides the named individual in the inside address, is receiving the letter. It should always be a lowercase "c." Following the "c," you'd indicate who is receiving the copy.

A double space below the "c" notation, you might include a "blind copy" notation. A "blind" copy means that the "bc" notation is only on the person's letter who is receiving the blind copy – it would be "blind" to the original recipient who is named in the inside address.

The last part of a letter that might be included would be the "ps" or post script. However, don't include the letters "ps." You might use the "ps" to re-emphasize a point made in the letter – do not use it to type something that you forgot to include when you were typing the letter.

Every letter will not include all these parts. But, if the extra parts are included, the order of those parts is important.

These letters need to look "framed" on the page. The vertical centering is very important when creating letters. It is easier to add the vertical centering after you have the letter typed—just don't forget to do so. The steps to make a document vertically centered are: (1) Page Layout tab, (2) Page Setup launch arrow, (3) Layout tab, (4) Page Vertical Alignment set to Center, then OK.

**2. Modified Block Letter:** The second letter style is Modified Block, and the example in the handout shows that it has mixed punctuation. Modified block means that some of the letter parts will **begin** at the center point. "Beginning at Center" and "Centered" are two different things. To determine where the center point is, look at the margins for your current document. The default margins create a 6.5 inch typing line. The center point for those margin settings would be 3.25. To have lines begin at center, just set a tab at 3.25 inches. If the paper you were typing would be a different size, the center point would be adjusted – just use the ruler in the software.

Items that would begin at the center point in a modified block letter would be the date, the complimentary closing, and the writer and his or her title. All these parts will be aligned at center (I may fold your assignment to see if you are truly setting the margins correctly).

The spacing for all the letter parts for this modified block style letter is in agreement with the block style.

**3. Modified Block with Indented Paragraphs:** This letter style is identical to the Modified Block, with the only exception being that the paragraphs in the body of the letter are indented ½ inch. Because you have set a left tab already at the center point of the page (usually 3.25 inches) for typing the date and closing lines, you'll need to set another tab at ½ inch. This will also be a left tab. If you hadn't set a tab at 3.25, there are automatic tabs every half inch that you could have used, but when you set a tab, the automatic tabs are no longer available.

It doesn't matter if you use open punctuation (no punctuation marks after the salutation or closing), or mixed punctuation (colon after salutation and comma after closing) on this modified block letter with indented paragraphs. The example on the handout does show mixed punctuation.

Don't forget to check the body of the letter to see if there is an enclosure. It is your responsibility to include the "enclosure" notation if there is an enclosure mentioned in the letter. Again, a reminder that all these letters need to be vertically centered on the page.

**4. Simplified Block Letter:** This is an acceptable letter style, but it is missing some parts that you might consider to be standard letter parts. This letter is a "block" style, so everything begins at the left margin. You'll notice that the letter begins with the date, then the inside address, but then it goes directly to the subject line—no salutation is included with this letter style. Notice that the subject line is typed in all capital letters. If you had included the word "Subject" at the beginning of the line, then you would have the choice of whether to use all caps, or just initial capital letters on each word. This letter also has no indented parts, and when you get to the end of the letter, you omit the complimentary closing (i.e. Sincerely), and go down four enters to the author's name and title.

A reminder: don't forget to use the courtesy title (Mr., Ms., Mrs., Miss) in both the inside address and in the salutation.

In addition to the four letter styles that were previously described, there are two additional letter styles that may be used as well.

- 1. Personal Letter:** A handout is included to describe the placement of the letter parts for a personal letter style. These would typically be letters that you are composing, that would not be placed on company letter head stationery. Notice that the first lines of this personal letter style are your return address lines, followed directly by the date. This letter will typically be blocked, always vertically centered, and either open or mixed punctuation would be appropriate.
- 2. Letter created for a Window envelope:** This is the only exception to the rule of having a letter vertically centered. You can't vertically center this letter, because the address must be in a certain location on the page if it will show through the window envelope correctly. This letter is called the "3-4-3" letter. Those numbers mean that you would enter three times before typing the letter's date, then press the enter four times before the inside address, and then three enters before the salutation. These settings are for the typical four-line inside address. If your inside address has more, or fewer lines, then the placement of the salutation must be adjusted to accommodate those lines. When this letter is folded to be placed into a window envelope, you will do a "z" fold. To do so, you'd

take the bottom of the sheet of stationery and fold up to just below the salutation. Then you'd make the second fold, ending up with the inside address on the outside of the folded letter. Place the letter into the window envelope with the address showing through the envelope's window.

The last page of the letters handout gives a summary of the letter rules. One of the items on that page is covering **Two-Page Letters**. When a letter is too long to fit on one page, you'd include a second page heading on the second page so if those two sheets of paper get separated, you'd know that those pages belong together. The rules state that you can't split a three-line paragraph. That is referred to as the widow/orphan rule. You can't leave a single line of a paragraph (the "widow") at the bottom of a page by itself, and you can't carry a single line of a paragraph to a new sheet by itself (the "orphan"). That widow/orphan protection should be set as a default in the software already. To check to see if that protection is in place on your computer, do the following: Home tab, Paragraph Launch Arrow, Line and Page Breaks Tab, and be sure that Widow/Orphan control is checked.

There are three items that go at the top of the second page of a letter: (1) the first line of the inside address (i.e. Attention Ms. Sally Brown, or Ms. Sally Brown), (2) followed by the page number, (3) followed by the date of the letter. These three items can be aligned at the left margin, or they could be placed on one line, with a left alignment, centered, and right aligned text.

A second page heading begins at the top of the page, or at least right below any letterhead that might be used. Therefore, the second page of a letter is not vertically centered.

**Date Line:** Remember that the month is always spelled out on a date in a business letter. Also notice that the handout states that the date line is followed by 4-6 enters. If you have a really short letter, you might want to add extra spaces here to improve the appearance of the letter on the page.

Most of the rest of the last page of the handout has been covered in previous sections of this lecture. Just a couple items perhaps haven't been covered thoroughly—typist initials for example. Typically the initials that you would use are yours, and are typed lowercase. Occasionally your supervisor might want his or her initials first in capital letters, followed by a colon, then your initials in lowercase.

## Envelopes

The next to the last page in the letters handout contains examples of typing envelopes. To create envelopes, do the following: Mailings tab, Envelopes. Depending on the text that you have created on the letters, the envelope may already have text in place for the addresses. If not, you can type the delivery address.

For the return envelope, you'd leave the area blank if you happen to be using preprinted envelopes for a company. For a plain envelope, you'd type the return address. If you are using a preprinted envelope, but you need to add a company instruction upon arrival, you'd want to choose the option of adding the envelope to the letter. The resulting envelope shape that you'll see on your screen can now be modified and you can space down far enough so that the company instruction would print below the preprinted address. When the envelope is added to the document, it will then be available anytime you might want to use that letter.

Again, referring to the envelope examples in the handout, if you are working in an office and you see a company instruction such as Personal (or confidential or open immediately), then that item goes directly to the executive without being pre-opened. On the stamp side of the envelope, you might find Post Office instructions (memory aide...mailing instructions go with the stamp). Examples of those notations might include Certified, Priority, Insured, etc. To add a mailing notation, use the envelope that you have added to the document, and tab over to the appropriate location to type that mailing notation.

For the delivery address, the Post Office preference is that the address is typed in all capital letters, and no punctuation for the city line. Always use the two-letter abbreviation for the state, but notice that there is no comma between the city and state in the top example. The bottom example shows the traditional way of typing the address.

When folding the letters (except for the Window envelope letter), you'd fold the bottom of the sheet of stationery up one-third, and then fold the top third of the page down. The top edge of the sheet of stationery will end up approximately one-quarter of an inch above the first fold. This will allow the recipient to easily open the letter. Place the letter into the envelope by having the back of the envelope toward you with the first fold on the letter going in first, and the top edge of the sheet of paper also toward you. The recipient will then be able to extract the letter from the envelope, and it will open in reading position.

## Printers

Most printers that are used in business are capable of printing different sizes of paper, can print front and back, can collate, and can print envelopes. You would need to consult the printer's instruction booklet to know how those features work on your particular model. Several of your assignments for this course will have specific directions as to whether you are to use plain paper for printing, if you are to use letterhead for printing, if you are to prepare a printed envelope (preprinted return address, plain or window), and/or if you are to fold your letter into the envelope. The supply packet for this course contains the stationery items that you'll need for printing purposes.

If your printer is capable of printing envelopes, then you will probably open a special document tray, and you will perhaps need to move the guides so that they hold the envelope in place securely. Usually you will find a diagram on the printer that shows how to place the envelope—i.e. does it go in upside down, etc.