



YOU WANT ME TO WRITE WHAT? A BUSINESS LETTER?

Your heart sinks! Oh my goodness! My boss wants me to write a business letter to a large client on his or her behalf. You think to yourself, "I'm not a good writer, how am I going to draft a letter and maintain our company's positive image with one of our largest customers?"

Does your job responsibility include writing either internal or external business letters? For most of us, there comes a time when this is a required job responsibility. Not to worry, it is not as hard as you think to draft a letter using your own personal style while maintaining a professional tone.

At BCG, we want to provide you with a few guidelines on how to make your business letter writing as direct and professional as possible. By simply following these guidelines you will be on your way to improved business writing.

1. Timing is everything

Remember, in today's hectic business world, your reader does NOT have time to read lengthy letters. Conciseness is a virtue. Keep your letter as short and sweet as possible.

2. Purposely purposeful

Do you want to waste your reader's time? Then write a letter without any direction. To keep your reader focused, you want your reader to know where your letter is going. Ensure that your letter has a focus, a purpose and a goal.

3. Spell-Check, it's there

Did someone say "turn on the spelling and grammar check?" You bet. Although it is not fool-proof, you will save quite a bit of time by using your spelling and grammar check prior to proof reading your letter. Nothing is more distracting and unprofessional than a letter riddled with misspellings or grammatical errors.

4. Responsibly responsive

If you are drafting a letter in response to a request or complaint, be responsive to your reader's needs and address every point they wish to have covered.

5. Straight to the point

Be clear and very specific about the purpose of the letter. In addition, when drafting an email, it is usually very helpful to start the email with a question that you wish for the reader to answer. This grabs their attention right away.

6. In the present

Try to use the present tense as much as possible. This provides your letter with a more active voice that will be more engaging to your reader.

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7. “I’m so excited”

Just because it is a business letter does not mean the letter has to be *boring*! Make your writing vigorous and direct. You will not only grab their attention, but you’ll keep it!

8. Short and sweet

Use short sentences and paragraphs. Too many words and paragraphs will distract your reader.

9. Let’s get personal

Use personal pronouns whenever possible. This ensures your reader that you are taking responsibility and ownership of the issues. For instance, try staying with “I’s” and “we’s” as much as possible.

10. This ain’t no street slang

Whoa, did that catch your attention? The word “ain’t” in a business letter! Definitely poor form. Try to avoid clichés and jargon...you never know what might turn a reader off.

11. Is that a fact?

Always separate fact from opinion. If it is necessary to include both, perhaps put the facts in one paragraph and the opinions in another. In addition, always state the fact first!

12. CI – no, not CSI

Continuous Improvement
Evaluate the results of your letters and strive to improve future correspondence.

13. Practice makes perfect

As the old saying goes, practice really does make perfect. So the next time your boss has a letter to write, VOLUNTEER to write it! The practice will only make you better!