

Writing a letter

A. Below, you will see eleven common situations that people encounter when they are writing a formal letter. Choose the sentence or phrase (A, B or C) that would be most appropriate in each situation.

- You are writing a letter to the headteacher of a school or college, but you don't know their name. How do you begin your letter?
A. Dear headteacher B. Dear Sir / Madam C. Dear Sir
- You have received a letter from the manager of a company which buys computer components from your company, and you are now replying. What do you say?
A. Thank you for your letter. B. Thanks a lot for your letter. C. It was great to hear from you.
- You recently stayed in a hotel and were very unhappy with the service you received. You are now writing to the manager. What do you say?
A. I had a horrible time at your hotel recently. B. I would like to say that I am unhappy about your hotel. C. I would like to complain about the service I received at your hotel recently.
- You have sent a letter of application to a college, together with your curriculum vitae which the college requested. What do you say in the letter to explain that your curriculum vitae is attached?
A. You asked for my curriculum vitae, so here it is. B. As you can see, I've enclosed my curriculum vitae. C. As you requested, I enclose my curriculum vitae.
- You have applied for a job, but you would like the company to send you more information. What do you say?
A. I would be grateful if you would send me more information. B. I want you to send me more information. C. Send me some more information, if you don't mind.
- In a letter you have written to a company, you tell them that you expect them to reply. What do you say?
A. Write back to me soon, please. B. Please drop me a line soon. C. I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- In a letter you have written, you want the recipient to do something and are thanking them in advance of their action. What do you say?
A. Thank you for your attention in this matter. B. Thanks for doing something about it. C. I am gratified that you will take appropriate action.
- The company you work for has received an order from another company and you are writing to them to acknowledge the order and let them know when you can deliver. What do you say?
A. About the order you sent on 12 January for... B. I would like to remind you of the order you sent on 12 January for... C. I refer to your order of 12 January
- In a letter, you explain that the recipient can contact you if they want more information. What do you say?
A. Give me a call if you want some more information. B. If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. C. If you would like any more information, why not get in touch?
- You began a letter with the recipient's name (e.g., Dear Mr. Perrin). How do you end the letter?
A. Yours faithfully B. Yours sincerely C. Best wishes
- You did not begin the letter with the recipient's name (see number 1 above). How do you end the letter?
A. Yours faithfully B. Yours sincerely C. Best wishes

B. Look at these sentences and decide if they are true or false.

- Formal letters are always longer than informal letters.
- In a formal letter it is acceptable to use colloquial English, slang and idioms.
- In a formal letter it is acceptable to use contractions (e.g., I've instead of I have)
- In a formal letter you should include your name and address at the top of the page.
- In a formal letter, you should always write the date in full (e.g., 1 April 2000 and not 1/4/00).
- In a formal letter, you should always put your full name (e.g., James Harcourt and not J. Harcourt) after your signature at the bottom of the letter.
- Formal letters do not need to be broken into paragraphs. It is acceptable to write them as one continuous paragraph.