

Letter Writing Vocabulary for

Formal Letters

1) The Greeting

- Use **Dear Sir or Madam** if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to. This will be the most likely situation.
 - Use **Dear + surname** if you do know their name, e.g. **Dear Mr Smith** or **Dear Mrs Jones**.
-

2) Do's & don'ts – useful rules

- **Do not** use contractions, e.g. **I'm, I'd, you'll, they're**

Contractions are informal language and should not be used in a formal letter.

Write:

I am writing to complain...' not **I'm** writing to complain...'

I would like to apply for...' not **I'd** like to apply for...'

- **Do not** use abbreviations or acronyms

This is the same rule as for informal letters. Save abbreviations and acronyms for texting and social media.

3) Common letter types

Here are the 7 letter topics again. The ones highlighted in red are the ones you are most likely to get for a formal letter.

- **A request**
- **A letter of complaint**
- **An apology**
- **A letter of explanation**
- **An application or resignation letter**
- **Recovery**
- **A letter to make an arrangement**

a) A request

- Could you please....
- Please would you consider....
- I would be grateful if....
- I would appreciate it if you could....

b) A letter of complaint

- I am very unhappy with / about....
- I write to complain about....
- I am extremely dissatisfied with / about
- I am writing to express my disappointment...

c) An application or resignation letter

- I am writing to apply for the position of....
- I would like to apply for....
- Please find my CV attached.
- I am writing to tender my resignation.
-hand in my notice

d) An invitation

- I regret that I am unable to attend....
- I am pleased to accept....

e) A letter to make an arrangement

- I am writing to enquire about....
- I am writing to confirm the arrangements for....
- I would like to know....
- Please can you tell me....

4) Other useful phrases

Stating Purpose

- I am writing to inform you that....
- I am writing to express my concern / disappointment / dissatisfaction
- I am writing to request...
- I am writing with regard to...

Thanking

- Thank you for...
 - I very much appreciate...
 - No words can express my gratitude...
 - Thank you for your attention to this matter....
-

5) The signoff

You must use a suitable phrase to end your letter. One of these examples will be appropriate for most letters.

- I look forward to hearing from you.
- I hope to hear from you in the near future.
- I await your response.
- I expect to hear from you soon.
- I thank you for your consideration.
- Please respond at your earliest convenience.

There are three ways you can sign off your letter:

- Yours sincerely
- Yours faithfully
- Kind regards

Follow these rules when deciding which to use:

- **Yours sincerely** – if you started the letter with ‘Dear + surname’, e.g. Dear Mr Jones
- **Yours faithfully** – if you started the letter with ‘Dear Sir / Madam’

‘**Kind regards**’ is formal but friendly and is also appropriate for most situations. It is particularly useful if you struggle to remember how to spell ‘sincerely’ and ‘faithfully’.

Always sign off a formal letter with your full name, e.g.

Kind regards,

Jacky Spear