

✓ Checklist: Usability of Letters

(Numbers in parentheses refer to the first page of discussion.)

Content

- Does the situation call for a formal letter rather than a memo or email? (360)
- Is the letter addressed to the correct and specifically named person? (362)
- Have you determined the position or title of your recipient? (362)
- Does the letter contain all the standard parts? (360)
- Does the letter have all needed specialized parts? (364)
- Is the letter's main point clearly stated? (362)
- Is all the necessary information included? (38)

Arrangement

- Does the introduction engage the reader and preview the body section? (362)
- Is the direct or indirect pattern used appropriately? (371)
- Does the conclusion encourage the reader to act? (362)
- Is the format acceptable and correct? (365)

Style

- Does the letter reflect a "you" perspective throughout? (369)
- Is the letter in conversational language (free of letterese)? (370)
- Does the tone reflect your relationship with the recipient? (240)
- Is the letter designed for a tasteful, conservative look? (368)
- Is the style clear, concise, fluent, exact, and likable? (215)
- Have you proofread with extreme care? (21)



Exercises

1. Bring to class a copy of a business letter addressed to you or a friend. Compare letters. Choose the most and least effective.
2. Write and mail an unsolicited letter of inquiry about the topic you are investigating for an analytical report or research assignment. In your letter you might request brochures, pamphlets, or other informative literature, or you might ask specific questions. Submit a copy of your letter, and the response, to your instructor.
3.
 - a. As a student in a state college, you learn that your governor and legislature have cut next year's operating budget for all state colleges by 20 percent. This cut will cause the firing of young and popular faculty members; drastically reduce admissions, financial aid, and new programs; and wreck college morale. Write a claim letter to your governor or representative, expressing your strong disapproval and justifying a major adjustment in the proposed budget.
 - b. Write a claim letter to a politician about some issue affecting your school or community.