

# UNIT 4

## Writing Good Paragraphs

In this unit, you will learn:

- What a paragraph is
- How to write topic sentences
- How to write supporting sentences
- How to recognise irrelevant sentences

## Understanding Paragraphs

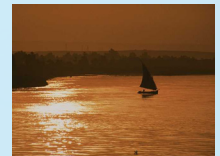
In Unit 2, you learned that a paragraph is a group of sentences about **one main idea**. This means that each paragraph has a topic (what you are writing about) and a **focus** (what you want to say about that topic). In a good paragraph all of the sentences will be connected to the topic and focus.

What does a good simple paragraph look like? Most simple paragraphs will include: a **topic sentence**, several **supporting sentences** and, sometimes, a **concluding sentence**.

The **topic sentence** is often (but not always), the first sentence in the paragraph. The topic sentence tells the reader what the main idea of the paragraph is, i.e., the topic and focus of the paragraph.

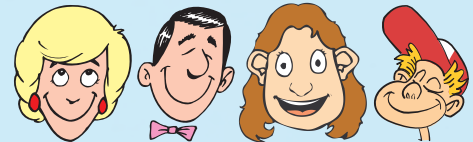
Look again at the example paragraphs you have seen in this book. Look at the topic sentences.

Unit 1: My best ever vacation was in Egypt two years ago.



The **topic** is the writer's **trip to Egypt**, and the **focus** is that **it was his or her best ever vacation**.

Unit 2: I am lucky because I have a wonderful family.

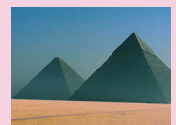


The **topic** is the **writer's family**, and the **focus** is **why the family members are wonderful**.

The **supporting sentences** give examples, explanation, information and opinion to support the main idea of the paragraph. Therefore, all **supporting sentences** should help the reader to understand the topic and focus of the sentence.

Look again at the example paragraphs you have seen in this book. Look at the supporting sentences.

In Unit 1: *We spent the first three days in Cairo and from there we visited the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The Pyramids were amazing.*



In Unit 2: *I love everyone in my family very much. My mum is very kind and looks after all of the family.*



All of these example sentences support the main idea of the paragraph.

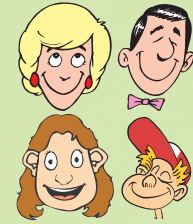
The **concluding sentence** is the last sentence in the paragraph. It is often similar to the topic sentence and reminds the reader of the topic and focus of the paragraph, but it should use different words, if possible. Here are some examples:

In Unit 1: *It was a fantastic vacation.*

This concludes the paragraph about the writer's best ever vacation.

In Unit 2: *I guess I am lucky to have such a wonderful family.*

This concludes the paragraph about the writer's family.



## Topic sentences

### Exercise 1 – Choose a topic sentence

Look at the supporting sentences in these short paragraphs and choose the best topic sentence.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ *Mine is ten years old, and it is always*  
*breaking down when I need it. It costs a lot of money for repairs each year. Also, the heater*  
*doesn't work any more, so it is cold in the winter. I really wish I could change it.*

Choose the best topic sentence:

- A. My car is very old.                      B. I wish I could buy a new car.  
C. My car costs a lot of money.



(2) \_\_\_\_\_ *The teachers are all very old and boring.*  
*The courses are not good. The buildings are old and dirty and there is no heating in them. Worst of*  
*all, it takes me two hours to get there. I wish I had gone to a different college.*

Choose the best topic sentence:

- A. My college is too old.                      B. I don't like the teachers at my college.  
C. I really hate my college.



### Exercise 2 – Try it yourself

Imagine that your teacher has asked you to write a paragraph about the following topics:

- A. Movies    B. Computers

Think of three different topic sentences for each topic. Each topic sentence should focus on the topic in a different way.





## Supporting sentences

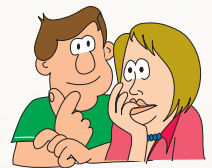
Read again what you learned above about supporting sentences.

### Exercise 1 – Choose the sentences

**Part 1** – Look at the topic sentences below and choose the best 4 supporting sentences for each one.

Check  the first box of the ones you choose.

1. Learning English is very difficult. Firstly, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. In addition, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Also, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Finally, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. I think it will take a long time to learn English well.



- a) I don't like speaking English.
- b) we don't have the chance to practise with native speakers.
- c) many people in the world learn English.
- d) the grammar is very different from my native language.
- e) the pronunciation is difficult to get right.
- f) it is easy to learn English vocabulary.
- g) I have only one English class a week.



2. I hate my job. For one thing, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Another thing is that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Also, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. However, the worst thing is that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. I think it's time to look for a new job.



- a) my colleagues are friendly.
- b) the salary is very low.
- c) my boss is always getting angry and shouting at me.
- d) the office is in a great location.
- e) I want to work there forever.
- f) I have to work until about nine o'clock every night.
- g) our office building is old and dirty.



**Part 2** – Now number your supporting sentences 1 – 3 (in the second box ) in the order you want to write them in the paragraph. **HINT:** We often write our most important point last.

When you have finished, check your answers with your teacher.

**Irrelevant sentences**

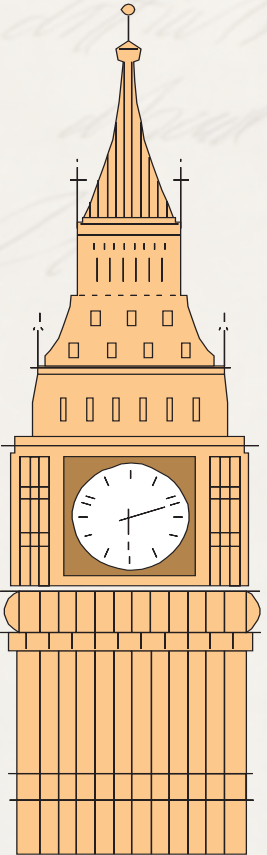
Look again at the sentences in **Exercise 1**. The sentences you **did not choose** should all be **irrelevant sentences**. The sentences may be about the same topic, but they do not support the idea in the topic sentence. They are **irrelevant** to the **focus** of the paragraph.

**Exercise 3 – Sort it out**

Below are two separate paragraphs about London. All of the sentences are jumbled. You must decide: a) which are the two topic sentences, b) which are the correct supporting sentences for each paragraph, and c) which sentences are irrelevant.

Write **T1** and **T2** in the boxes  for each topic sentence. Write **S1** in the boxes  for each of the sentences that support **T1**. Write **S2** in the boxes  for all of the sentences that support **T2**. Write **IR** in the boxes  for all of the irrelevant sentences.

- a) There are many excellent bars and restaurants.
- b) Millions of foreign tourists visit London for sightseeing every year.
- c) The city has many world-famous galleries and museums.
- d) Students from all over the world study at London’s schools and colleges.
- e) There are many interesting markets and shopping centres.
- f) The city is home to the world’s first subway system.
- g) London is probably the best place in the world to go to the theatre.
- h) People from all over the world live in the city.
- i) London is a wonderful city to visit for entertainment.
- j) London can be cold in the winter.
- k) London is perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in the world.
- l) You can hear many different languages being spoken on any London street.
- m) The city is in South East England.



Check your answers with your teacher.



Now write the paragraphs below, choosing the order of the sentences as you wish.









# Write an Informal Letter

An informal letter or a personal letter is a letter to a close friend or an acquaintance. Isn't it wonderful to receive such a letter from a friend? Better yet, isn't it wonderful to actually write one?

If you think letter writing is lame or old fashioned, read this article first: [Letter writing](#)

Letter writing still has a sentimentality about it that transcends all other forms of communication, and this is probably why some people stick to it even though they could use other means.

The best way of learning how to write letters, I reckon, is to look at a number of specimens, analyse what has to be done and perhaps what does not have to be done, don't you agree?

Of course there are no hard and fast rules about how to write an informal letter and common sense dictates that someone may use whatever works best for him. However, there is a conventional way of going about it that will make all the difference if you apply it.

Let's start off by reviewing a letter I wrote to my sister some four years ago:

Hillcrest Secondary School,  
Po Box, 60453,  
LIVINGSTONE  
7<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Dear Mimi,

How are you my dear sister? I hope you are fine. Don't worry about me; I am very fine. I am now a very strong young man you know. How are those wonderful brothers of mine? Pass them my greetings.

I received your letter. Thanks a million for writing. The brothers and sisters in my congregation are fine. I am only sorry to hear that Br. Banda is still sick. I hope he will recover soon.

My journey back here was fine, though it was quite a long one. I wanted to travel by CR bus but guess what; all the wretched buses were full! So I had no choice but to travel by a small Rosa bus. The journey took seven hours. By the time we reached, my legs were tired and my bottom was severely sore, ugh! Next time, I promise, I'm not gonna use one of 'em tiny buses!

I am glad you have a new literature teacher. Work very hard Miriam. I know you can do it. Follow that plan I gave you and put your heart to it. You will be successful. I am glad you are a librarian. Did I tell you that I am librarian too, eh?

Finally Miriam, I would like to wish you all the best in your studies and all your endeavours. Don't forget God. I love you and miss you; can't wait to see you again...

Take care,  
Michael

P.S please reply

### *Informal Sample Letter #1*

## 1. Address and date

Some people may think the address is not important in an informal letter and prefer to leave it out. That works well if the person you are writing to knows your address already or if she has a good memory! However, it is very unlikely that someone will always remember your address, so it is always a good idea to include it. Remember, this is the address they have to write to for the letter to reach you. The recipient's address is on the envelope.

The address and date should be in the right hand corner. If I were writing to a person in another country, I would have preferred to add the following details:

Hillcrest Secondary School,

P.O Box 60453,

Livingstone,

ZAMBIA

10101

7th February 2004

Since she already lives in Zambia, it is not necessary to include the country and the postcode i.e. 10101. However, if you are writing to someone outside the country, always include your country and post code.

After you have written the address, leave a line and write the date.

## 2. **Salutation**

The most common salutation in an informal letter is “Dear....”

Note that it is followed by a comma.

Dear Mimi,

However, some go extremely informal and use “Hey!” or “Hi!”

You should use your discretion. Obviously if you are writing to your father, you would not use “Hey!” unless of course you are extremely close.

## 3. **Body**

Here are a few things you should take note of:

- **Paragraphs:**

Since informal letters are usually written by hand, the paragraphs are usually indented. However, with more



people using their computers to do most of their writing (and I have a bad feeling most people will forget how to write with their hands), it is becoming a common practice to write paragraphs without indentations—like the way this one is written. This, apparently, is the modern way of writing paragraphs.

- **use informal language**

The first paragraph generally expresses a greeting, followed by wishes of good health. Remember you are writing to someone you know very well, so try to be as friendly as possible:

How are you my dear sister?

However, always use your discretion. Try not to go overboard. Some people become bold and daring in letters and write things that they would otherwise not say to the person face to face. Obviously if you are writing to an adult that you respect, like your dad, try not to write things like:

“What’s up dude!” or “What’s going down?”

Try to picture the person you are writing to standing in front of you. Imagine the things that you would say to him and write them down. This will help you not to go overboard.

Also avoid boring sentences like...

“I am writing this letter to....”

...unless you are writing to a stranger. Even so, try to be as amiable as possible:

I have heard so much about you and would be head over heels with joy if you could agree to be my pen pal

Try to be as conversational as possible. You are allowed to use colloquial language – i.e. language that is appropriate for speech but not really for writing:

My journey back here was fine, though it was quite a long one. I wanted to travel by CR bus but guess what; all the wretched buses were full! So I had no choice but to travel by a small Rosa

bus. The journey took seven hours. By the time we reached, my legs were tired and my bottom was severely sore, ugh! Next time, I promise, I'm not gonna use one of 'em tiny buses!

However informal you get, you should not forget to pay attention to...

- **punctuation and spelling**

I have come across a good number of letters that abound with spelling mistakes and awful punctuation. Such mistakes tend to distract the reader, so don't neglect them even though you know your friend will understand.

The quality of your letter also speaks volumes about the kind of person you are so all the more reason to be careful!

If you use **contractions**, make sure that you put the apostrophe in the right places. For example:

*Isn't* and not *is'nt*

*won't* and not *wont*

*mustn't* and not *must'nt*

The contraction *it's* is especially one that you must watch out for. It is the short form of *it is* or *it has*. But if you want to use *it* to indicate possession, you should use *its* and not *it's*. Check out this example:

*The dog lost its collar.*

Remember also to use capitals for the right things i.e. the names of people, places, holidays, etc should all start with a capital letter.

Bottom line? Don't throw away your grammar book!

- **Use consistence voice and style**

Use the active voice if you want your letter to sound more conversational and interesting. Avoid shifts in the voice. Check out this article on the advantage of using the active voice: [Use active Voice](#)

One common error is inconsistency in the tense. For example read the following sentence:

*I was going to town yesterday when a dog bite me and I ran all the way to the hospital.*

Here is a sentence with starts in the past tense and then right in the middle, the tense changes to present and then finally reverts to past. Even if your friend is very understanding, this is still distracting.

- **Ask questions**

It is always a good idea to ask questions in the body of the letter that you would like the person to answer in their reply. Questions work as a good base on which to write a letter, and they give the recipient motivation to reply:

How are those wonderful brothers of mine?

Did I tell you that I am librarian too, eh?



# Writing a Formal Letter

**Formal letter writing** is undoubtedly one of the most challenging types of letter format. When putting it together, often you are addressing a person or organization with whom you are not familiar and the quality of your content, including spelling and grammar will be strongly scrutinized.

**Sender's Address:** The sender's address usually is included in letterhead. If you are not using letterhead, include the sender's address at the top of the letter one line above the date. Do not write the sender's name or title, as it is included in the letter's closing. Include only the street address, city, and zip code.

**Date:** The date line is used to indicate the date the letter was written. However, if your letter is completed over a number of days, use the date it was finished in the date line. When writing to companies within the United States, use the American date format. (The United States-based convention for formatting a date places the month before the day. For example: June 11, 2001. ) Write out the month, day and year two inches from the top of the page. Depending which format you are using for your letter, either left justify the date or tab to the center point and type the date.

**Inside Address:** The inside address is the recipient's address. It is always best to write to a specific individual at the firm to which you are writing. If you do not have the person's name, do some research by calling the company or speaking with employees from the company. Include a personal title such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr. Follow a woman's preference in being addressed as Miss, Mrs., or Ms. If you are unsure of a woman's preference in being addressed, use Ms.

**Mr.** - for a male

**Mrs.** - for a married female

**Miss** - for an unmarried female

**Ms.** - for a female whose status is unknown or would prefer to remain anonymous

**Dr.** - for a person with the status of a doctor

If there is a possibility that the person to whom you are writing is a Dr. or has some other title, use that title. Usually, people will not mind being addressed by a higher title than they actually possess. To write the address, use the U.S. Post Office Format. For international addresses, type the name of the country in all-capital letters on the last line. The inside address begins one line below the sender's address or one inch below the date. It should be left justified, no matter which format you are using.

**Salutation** “Use the same name as the inside address, including the personal title. If you know the person and typically address them by their first name, it is acceptable to use only the first name in the salutation (for example: Dear Lucy:). In all other cases, however, use the personal title and last/family name followed by a colon. Leave one line blank after the salutation. If you don't know a reader's gender, use a nonsexist salutation, such as their job title followed by the receiver's name. It is also acceptable to use the full name in a salutation if you cannot determine gender. For example, you might write Dear Chris Harmon: if you were unsure of Chris's gender.

**Body:** For block and modified block formats, single space and left justify each paragraph within the body of the letter. Leave a blank line between each paragraph. When writing a business letter, be careful to remember that conciseness is very important. In the first paragraph, consider a friendly opening and then a statement of the main point. The next paragraph should begin

justifying the importance of the main point. In the next few paragraphs, continue justification with background information and supporting details. The closing paragraph should restate the purpose of the letter and, in some cases, request some type of action.

**Closing:** The closing begins at the same vertical point as your date and one line after the last body paragraph. Capitalize the first word only (for example: Thank you) and leave four lines between the closing and the sender's name for a signature. If a colon follows the salutation, a comma should follow the closing; otherwise, there is no punctuation after the closing.

**Enclosures:** If you have enclosed any documents along with the letter, such as a resume, you indicate this simply by typing Enclosures one line below the closing. As an option, you may list the name of each document you are including in the envelope. For instance, if you have included many documents and need to ensure that the recipient is aware of each document, it may be a good idea to list the names.

### **A Note about Format and Font**

**Block Format:** When writing business letters, you must pay special attention to the format and font used. The most common layout of a business letter is known as block format. Using this format, the entire letter is left justified and single spaced except for a double space between paragraphs.

**Font :**Another important factor in the readability of a letter is the font. The generally accepted font is Times New Roman, size 12, although other fonts such as Arial may be used. When choosing a font, always consider your audience. If you are writing to a conservative company, you may want to use Times New Roman. However, if you are writing to a more liberal company, you have a little more freedom when choosing fonts.

**Punctuation:** Punctuation after the salutation and closing - use a colon (:) after the salutation (never a comma) and a comma (,) after the closing. In some circumstances, you may also use a less common format, known as open punctuation. For this style, punctuation is excluded after the salutation and the closing.

### **Types of Formal Letters**

- Write a *Request* Letter
- Writing a *Letter of Interest* (job)
- Writing a *Complaint* Letter
- Writing an *Apology* Letter
- Writing a *Letter of Appeal*
- Writing an *Invitation* Letter
- Writing a *Resignation* Letter
- *Requesting a Letter of Recommendation*
- *Interview Thank You* Letters
- Write a *Farewell* Letter
- Writing a *Reference* Letter

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #1—*Request* Letter**

A request letter is a letter requesting either information or a favor. There are a variety of things you can request when writing a request letter. A good request letter will usually be concise and to

the point. A hard-copy request letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date).

### **Request Letter Writing**

- In the opening paragraph, briefly introduce yourself and let the recipient know why you are writing to them.
- In the next paragraph, tell the recipient what you are requesting of them along with any pertinent details that would help them to fulfill your request. If you need your request filled by a certain date, be sure to let them know in this paragraph.
- In the closing paragraph, thank the recipient for their time/consideration and provide your contact information (if applicable).

#### ***Example***

764 Cheery Lane  
Clearwater Falls, FL 23619

September 27, 2015

Mr. Louis Henderson  
Store Manager  
The Corner Cafe  
273 Main Street  
Clearwater Falls, FL 23619

Dear Mr. Henderson:

My name is Cathy Pettis and I'm the chair of the Clearwater Falls Elementary School Fundraising Committee. The committee is planning to hold a fundraiser next month to raise funds for this year's field trips and we're looking for donors to help out with providing goods for the fundraising event.

If The Corner Cafe is willing to help donate some coffee and cups, we would greatly appreciate it. Our fundraiser will be held on the morning of October 18th and we're expecting around 200 people to show up.

Thanks for your time and consideration, if you need to contact me with any questions, feel free to call me at 555-555-5555, I'm available to speak between 10am-5pm on weekdays.

Sincerely,

Signature

Cathy Pettis

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #2—Letter of *Interest***

Letters of interest are written to express your interest in working for a particular company in a specific field. Your letter may be written either in response to a job opening or just to investigate



possible employment.. However, make your letter stand out from the crowd using the following tips:

1. Before you write, do your homework. Research the background of the company and familiarize yourself with their products and/or services.
2. Be sure to find out the name of the individual who does the hiring. Address your letter to his/her attention and use her/his name in the salutation. Simply writing "To Whom It May Concern" and "Dear Sir or Madam" could be considered be lazy or rude.
3. Start your introductory paragraph with the reason you are interested in pursuing employment with this company. Try not to start the first sentence with "I". (See sample letter of interest.) Also, explain what prompted your inquiry, such as a classified advertisement, a media article or interview, or a referral from an employee.
4. In the next paragraph(s), give specific examples of your qualifications. Don't hesitate to indicate the reasons why you would be an asset to the company. Illustrate your skills, strengths, and achievements in a professional, yet personable way. Stay away from strings of abbreviated credentials. These, if you have them, should be on the resume you'll enclose with the letter. Direct the reader to your resume and any other enclosures.
5. In your final paragraph, thank the individual for his/her time in considering you as a new employee. Indicate a precise time when you will contact him/her by phone to follow up on your letter. Also, be sure to let the individual know how to contact you.

A hard-copy interest letter should be written in the business letter format, while an email should be sent in the same format but without the heading (your return address, their address, and the date). Keep your letter short, no more than a single page. Remember to check it thoroughly for errors in spelling, grammar and to be sure it addresses each point you wanted to m

***Example (Interest)***

421 Liberty St.

Kenyon, MN 55021

June 7, 2007

Ms. Jen Carlson  
Human Resources  
DTI  
111 Riverfront Ste 325  
PO Box - Box 157  
Wabasha, MN 55946

Dear Ms. Carlson:

Your recent advertisement in the Herald made it clear that customer satisfaction is an integral part of DTI. In addition, my close friend, Paula Chavez who is an employee at DTI suggested that my special talents might benefit your customer service department.

Part of my success is because I place a high value on personal integrity and represent both my employer and myself in an ethical and respectable manner. Also, I have a diligence in paying close attention to detail; as a representative of your company I would bring focus not only to the value of your services but also to quality of customer service. Furthermore, I am a hard, smart-working, self-starter who works well in a team environment.

I will call you on June 15 to answer any questions about this letter or my resume in the hope of scheduling an interview. If you prefer, please contact me by phone (555) 454-1307 or e-mail, ljones@nowhere.com.

Thank you for your time in considering my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Signature

Linda Jones

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #3—*Complaint Letter***

When writing a complaint letter, you want to keep it short and to the point to help ensure that your letter will be read in its entirety. If you write a seven page complaint letter, it's highly unlikely that someone will sit down and read all seven pages.

The complaint letter should be addressed to the customer service/consumer affairs department or the head office if there is no customer service department. The address and contact information of the customer service department should be available on the company's products or website.

- In the first paragraph you should identify what the issue is and any relevant information that you believe is important. Be sure to include the following information if it's applicable to the situation: the date/time of the issue, location, name of person on duty, name of product, what the problem was, your account number, model number, price, warranty information and reference number. Be sure to stick with the facts and avoid putting emotions into your letter.
- The next paragraph should state what you would like done to resolve the situation. If you received poor service, you could request an apology or a coupon. If a product malfunctioned, you could request that you could exchange the product for a new one or request a refund.
- The last paragraph should thank the reader for the time. You can also throw in some compliments about something you liked about their company's product or service.
- You should include your telephone number/e-mail address after your printed name so that they can contact you ASAP if necessary.
- Be sure to keep a copy of the letter for yourself and include photocopies of any relevant documents and enclose them with your letter.

***Example (Complaint)***

65 Market Street  
Val Haven, CT 95135

June 30, 2014

Customer Service  
Cool Guy Sports, LLC  
8423 Green Terrace Road  
Guyville, WA 65435

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have recently ordered a new pair of soccer cleats (item #6542951) from your website on June 21. I received the order on June 26. Unfortunately, when I opened it, I saw that the cleats were used. The cleats had dirt all over them and there was a small tear in front of the part where the left toe would go. Lastly, and perhaps most disturbing, there was a small blotch of what looked to be dried blood on one of the shoelaces. My order number is AF26168156.

To resolve the problem, I would like you to credit my account for the amount charged for my cleats; I have already went out and bought a new pair of cleats at my local sporting goods store so sending another would result in me having two pairs of the same cleats.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I have been a satisfied customer of your company for many years and this is the first time I have encountered a problem. If you need to contact me, you can reach me at (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Kenny “Soccer Man” Thomas

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #4—*Apology Letter***

An apology letter shows that you are sorry and says that you value your relationship with the other party. The sooner an apology letter is written and sent out the better it is for the relationship. Depending on the nature of the letter, it can either be written in the friendly or the business letter format.

### **Friendly/Personal Apology Letter**

If this is a personal letter you should start the letter by saying that you are sorry to the recipient. Next you should admit your fault and take responsibility for your actions. Next you should volunteer or ask if there is any way that you can help out to resolve the situation. Then you should let the recipient that you will try to make sure that the situation will not happen again. To close off the letter, you should apologize again. When writing a personal apology letter it should come from the heart and be sincere.

### **Formal/Business Apology Letter**

If this is a business letter you should start the letter by saying that you are sorry to the recipient. Next you should give an explanation as to what went wrong. Then you should try to rectify the problem. To close off the letter you should apologize again.

#### ***Example (Personal Apology)***

68 Looney Lane  
Nostromo, NE 25385  
Apt. 3-D

January 5, 2017

Dear Ripley,

I am sorry about forgetting about our lunch date. It was completely my fault; I was so busy at work that it must have slipped my mind. How about I treat you to lunch next Wednesday at the new Irish restaurant Crean's Cabbage Factory at 12:30PM? I have marked this date in my planner, set reminders on all my phones, and placed various color-coded post-its around my studio apartment. I have also begun a watercolor, charcoaled-pastel self-portrait with a cloud speech bubble reminding me to remind myself that I need to pay attention more. I will never forget again.

Your best friend,

John Ash

#### ***Example (Business Apology)***

5868 Maple Wood Street  
Fairfield, CA 37626

November 29, 2014

Mr. Joseph Bicman  
358 Noncook Road  
John's Town, PA 57323



Dear Mr. Bicman:

I apologize for the mix-up of order #: 26429782. We have just implemented a new packaging system that still has a few bugs that still needs to be worked out, but we did fix your order and sent it out this morning. For your trouble, we have enclosed a \$10 gift certificate which can be used at any of our stores (restrictions apply). Once again I would like to apologize for the mix-up in your order and any inconveniences this may have caused you.

Respectfully,

*Signature*

Theodore Donald 'Donny' Kerabatsos  
Customer Service Manager

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #5—*Appeal Letter***

In cases where unfair treatment has occurred, a letter of appeal can help to rectify the situation. An appeal letter allows you to state your side of the story using facts to support your cause to convince the reader(s) to reconsider your case.

### ***Appeal Letter Writing***

1. The first paragraph should introduce yourself and explain why you are writing the letter. Although it may be difficult, be sure to keep your tone and emotions in check to show that you can present an objective viewpoint. Keep the first paragraph as concise and clear as possible so that the reader can immediately understand its urgency.

2. The next paragraph(s) should narrate the account of what happened, and why your appeal should be granted. Include all the necessary facts in order to legitimize your case. You can start by referring to your handbook or guidelines as member of that particular group or institution. Also, provide specific times and date when particular events occurred. To make your letter more reader-friendly, use bullet-points every time you need to enumerate. After doing this, refer to testimonials from people related to your work, transcript of records, and medical certificate, if necessary.
3. The last part should summarize everything you have stated above. Repeat the necessary points that need to be elucidated. Also include the contact details and where you can be reached. Close out the letter by thanking the reader for their time

***Example (Appeal)***

4682 Farrow Parkway  
Chicago, IL 60621

June 20, 2012

Ward Cleaver  
Dean, Academic Division  
Chicago College University  
1323 E. 84th St., 5th floor  
Chicago, IL 60621

Dear Mr. Cleaver:

I am a senior Philosophy major who took PH401 Advanced Metaphysics class under Prof. Lebowski, and

I am writing to you to appeal a retake for the final comprehensive oral exam that was given on June 18, 2012.

I feel that Mr. Lebowski did not give my situation the proper respect and understanding that it truly deserved. On June 8, 2007 at 10:37 A.M., I was struck by a sedan going 65 mph on my way to the university. I survived the accident but fractured my legs, hips, and cracked my skull. I have enclosed the medical documents detailing my stay at St. Francis Hospital along with this letter.

Because of this setback, I had to reschedule all my exams for the following week (June 18-22, 2012) to the week after that (June 25-29) to allow for me to recover. I had my classmate Larry Mondello send the necessary letters to all of my professors requesting to postpone the date of my final exams by a week. All of them agreed except for Prof. Lebowski, who did not send any reply at all. The doctors said that it would take me at least two weeks to properly recover, and even if I did prepare for my exams for Prof. Lebowski, I would not be able to produce the expected output considering my debilitated condition.

I feel that the situation is not warranted because I never got a grade lower than a B or (80-85) on his exams. Therefore, the risk of me failing the course and being prevented from graduating because of not being able to take his final exams due to an unavoidable circumstance is unacceptable. The handbook states in Article III, Section II that “Students who have medical emergencies prior to a particular exam will be given the option to reschedule that exam.”

The medical situation which prevented me from taking the final at the scheduled time was beyond my control. I would ask you to grant me another opportunity to take the final exam. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss this matter. Feel free to call me with any questions at 555-555-5555. I appreciate the time that you have taken to read my appeal.

Sincerely,

Walter Sobchack

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #6—*Requesting a Letter of Recommendation (Personal)—via email***

1. Getting a good recommendation letter can significantly help you in the application process, so it's important to ask someone who you are in good terms with for a letter. It is also important to ask someone that knows you well for a recommendation and that you ask them for it in person. If you are seeking a letter for college or graduate schools, it is recommended that you request letters from your teachers/professors. If you are seeking a letter for a job, business or professional school then it would be ideal if you got one from your current company. If you have not been at your current company long or if you are not currently employed then asking a previous employer is recommended. If that is not possible seek recommendations from respected professionals that you may know, such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, ministers and so on.
2. Ask for the letters early on, don't wait until the day before the letter is supposed to be sent in to request the letters of recommendation. Instead ask ahead of time. If you are going to apply to school ask your professor at least a month ahead of time. If you are seeking a professional letter, ask for a letter of recommendation whenever you leave a job.
3. Assist the writer with as much material as necessary, providing the writer with your resume and a list of achievements will make it easier on the writer. You may also want to give him/her any information that will help with the letter including your plans for the future, your strengths, experiences and other qualities you want to be presented in the letter. Be honest about the information you give, if you embellish it'll catch up with you later.

4. You should provide the writer with a stamped and addressed envelope. Also if there is a guideline that needs to be followed or any other material that needs to be filled out, you should provide that to him/her.
5. After the letter is sent out, you should send a thank you note to the writer. You can also thank them in person or over the phone as well.

***Example (Requesting a Letter of Recommendation—email)***

**Subject:** Recommendation Request – Inigo Montoya

Dear Mr. Treehorn,

As part of the prerequisites for acceptance to university, I have been asked to provide a letter of recommendation. Would you be so kind as to write such a letter, with particular comments regarding my association in the honors program?

The deadline for submitting the letter is March 12<sup>th</sup>. However, if you are unable to provide a letter, please let me know by March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

I would be happy to answer any questions and provide further information which will help you to write your recommendation.

Thank you for all you have done for me and for taking the time to review this request.

Regards,

Inigo Montoya

## **Formal Letter Writing Workshop #7—Reference Letter**

Writing an effective reference letter has the power to help a candidate. Whether it is a job applicant or a prospective renter, a well-worded recommendation can make the difference between success and rejection.

### **What is a Reference Letter?**

In simplest terms, a reference letter puts the weight of your personal or professional reputation behind an applicant. It shows that you are unafraid to have your character and professional affiliation connected to the individual who is requesting the reference. Not surprisingly, writing this type of recommendation is something that you should consider with care.

### **Are You the Right Person for the Task?**

While it is flattering to have an applicant approach you with a request for a written reference, ask yourself if you are really the right person to do so. For example, when a job applicant needs a letter attesting to her or his personal conduct around confidential documents or money, you may not be able to comply if you have never worked with the individual in this type of setting. Since this letter states that you vouch for the person in a particular setting, you must have first-hand knowledge of the facts before agreeing to put together the document.

### **When Would You Write a Reference for Someone?**

1. The most common situation is to write the letter for a job applicant. When this applicant needs a boost behind a good resume, an effectively written reference can make a huge difference. Someone may ask you to write a letter if you have worked with the person, acted as a supervisor or were the actual employer.
2. Sometimes, property owners or managers require prospective renters to furnish personal references. They offer the rental manager an opportunity to learn a little about the individual before considering the application to rent an apartment, house or other property.

3. A third reason why you may find yourself in a position to write a reference letter is when a student or recent graduate approaches you. It is frequently a professor or teacher's letter that allows this person access to an internship position, an advanced placement course or an entry-level job.

### **What Should You Say?**

There are three things that you should **never** put into this kind of letter.

1. **Guarantees.** Do not offer up a personal guarantee that the applicant will be a successful intern, excellent employee or quiet renter. Since you have no control over the individual, putting such guarantees into a letter actually detracts from your message.
2. **Personal information.** Religion, race, sexual orientation and political leanings have no place in a reference letter. The same is true for the applicant's age, marital status or any health issues.
3. **Minor issues.** Although it is good to give specific details, it is a mistake to focus on one or two minor issues and miss the opportunity to provide the applicant with a powerful letter that emphasizes the weightier things. For example, an anecdote related to an excellent customer service incident is useful. Yet do not limit your reference to just this one situation. Rather, put it against the backdrop of a bigger picture.

### **Structure**

- Begin the body of the letter with a paragraph or two introducing yourself and your relationship to the applicant. This gives the reader an understanding why you chose to write the letter in the first place.
- The next paragraph should focus on the actual reference. This is where you refer to the applicant's job experience, rental history or academic background. Be as specific as possible. For professional references, include job titles, duties and achievements. For a rental reference, give a prior rental history and details about the individual's conduct. Within the frame of an academic reference, mention coursework that has been completed, grades earned and the current academic standing.
- Finish the letter by giving a clear personal assessment of the individual's skills that you back up with concrete examples. Welcome further inquiries and assure the reader that you are available for questions as needed. End the letter like you would any other business letter.

### ***Example (Reference Letter)***

Dear Admissions Committee,

I had the pleasure of teaching Sara in her 11th grade honors English class at Mark Twain High School. From the first day of class, Sara impressed me with her ability to be articulate about difficult concepts and texts, her sensitivity to the nuances within literature, and her passion for reading, writing, and creative expression- both in and out of the classroom. Sara is a talented literary critic and poet, and she has my highest recommendation as a student and writer.

Sara is talented at considering the subtleties within literature and the purpose behind authors' works. She produced an extraordinary year-long thesis paper on creative identity development, in which she compared works from three different time periods and synthesized cultural and historical perspectives to inform her analysis. When called upon to give her thesis defense in front of her peers, Sara spoke clearly and eloquently about her conclusions and responded to questions in a thoughtful way. Outside of the classroom, Sara is dedicated to her literary pursuits, especially to poetry. She publishes her poetry in our school's literary magazine, as well as in online magazines. She is an insightful, sensitive, and deeply self-aware individual driven to explore art, writing, and a deeper understanding of the human condition.

Throughout the year Sara was an active participant in our discussions, and she always supported her peers. Her caring nature and personality allow her to work well with others in a team setting, as she always respects others' opinions even when they differ from her own. When we held a class debate about gun laws, Sara opted to speak for the side opposite her own views. She explained her choice as motivated by a desire to put herself in other people's shoes, view the issues from a new perspective, and gain a clearer sense of the issue from all angles. Throughout the year, Sara demonstrated this openness to and empathy for the opinions, feelings, and perspectives of others, along with shrewd powers of observation, all qualities that makes her outstanding as a student of literature and burgeoning writer.

I am certain that Sara is going to continue to do great and creative things in her future. I highly recommend her for admission to your undergraduate program. She is talented, caring, intuitive, dedicated,



and focused in her pursuits. Sara consistently seeks out constructive feedback so she can improve her writing skills, which is a rare and impressive quality in a high school student. Sara is truly a standout individual who will impress everyone she meets. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at [callmeclmens@gmail.com](mailto:callmeclmens@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Thomas Sawyer  
English Teacher  
Mark Twain High School

## Note Making and Summary Writing.

The following passage that was part of the centralized Pre Board Paper was tricky. Hence, it has been solved below:

**Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow: (8 Marks)**

1. The tests of life are its plus factors. Overcoming illness and suffering is a plus factor for it moulds character. Steel is iron plus fire, soil is rock plus heat. So let's include the plus factor in our lives.
2. Sometimes the plus factor is more readily seen by the simple hearted. Myers tells the story of a mother who brought into her home – as a companion to her own son- a little boy who happened to have a hunch back. She had warned her son to be careful, not to refer to his disability. The boys were playing and after a few minutes she overheard her son say to his companion “ Do you know what you have got on your back ?” The little boy was embarrassed, but before he could reply, his playmate continued “ It is the box in which your wings are, and some day God is going to cut it open and then you will fly away and be an angel.”
3. Often it takes a third eye or a change in focus, to see the plus factor. Walking along the corridors of a hospital recently where patients were struggling with fear of pain and tests, I was perturbed. What gave me a fresh perspective were the sayings put up everywhere, intended to uplift. One saying made me conscious of the beauty of the universe in the midst of pain, suffering and struggle. The other saying assured me that God was with me when I was in deep water and that no troubles would overwhelm me.
4. The import of those sayings also made me aware of the nether springs that flow into people's lives when they touch rock bottom or are lonely or guilt ridden. The nether springs make recovery possible, and they bring peace and patience in the midst of negative forces.
5. The forces of death and destruction are not so much physical as they are psychic and psychological. When malice, hatred and hard heartedness prevail, they get channeled as forces of destruction. Where openness, peace and good heartedness prevail, the forces of life gush forth to regenerate hope and joy. The life force is triumphant when love overcomes fear. Both fear and love are deep mysteries, but the effect of love is to build, whereas fear tends to destroy. Love is generally the plus factor that helps build character. It creates bonds and its reach is infinite.
6. It is true there is no shortage of destructive elements – forces and people who seek to destroy others and in the process destroy themselves – but at the same time there are signs of love and life everywhere that are constantly enabling us to overcome setbacks. So let's not look at gloom and doom – let us seek positivity and happiness. For it is when you seek that you will find what is waiting to be discovered

(a) On the basis of your reading of the above passage, make notes on it in points only, using abbreviations, wherever necessary. Also suggest a suitable title. **(5 Marks)**

(b) Write a summary of the passage in not more than 80 words, using the notes you have made. **(3 Marks)**

### **The Tests of Life- the Plus Factors**

## Note Making and Summary Writing.

1. The Importance of the Tests of Life
  - a) Illness& Suffering build Char.
  - b) Simple hearted-View disability + vely eg: boy with hunch-backed companion.
2. Change of focus required
  - a) Sayings in hospital – awaken one to beauty of universe amidst pain; presence of God
    - i) Give strength to overcome obstacles
    - ii) Realisation- underlying hum. strength in troubles
    - iii) Bring Peace &Patience
3. Forces of Destruction
  - a) Psychic & psychlgcal
  - b) Consist of malice, hatred &hard headedness
  - c) Fear destroys
4. Forces of Life
  - a) Openness, peace& good heartedness
  - b) Love overcomes fear. Love builds char.& bonds
  - c) Discover signs of love, defeat destrctve elmnts.

### Key-Abbreviations

1. Char.- Character
2. +vely-Positively
3. Hum.-Human
4. Psychlgcal-Psychological
5. Destrctve-Destructive
6. Elmnts- Elements

### Summary

The tests of life like illness, suffering, pain and disability build character. The simple hearted have the ability to view them as signs of hope and the presence of God. Even in the midst of suffering there is God. The belief that amongst pain and suffering the universe is still beautiful and God present gives strength to overcome obstacles. One must realize there is an underlying human strength that emerges during troubles. This brings peace and patience. The forces of destruction can be overcome by the power of love.