

BUSINESS WRITING

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In business, industry and government, acronyms and initialisms are often used by people working together on particular projects or having the same specialties - as, for example, financial analysts or accountants. As long as such people are communicating with one another, the abbreviations are easily recognized and understood. If the same acronyms or initialisms were used in correspondence to someone outside the group, however, they might be incomprehensible to that reader and should be explained.

CORRESPONDENCE

The process of writing letters involves many of the same steps that go into most other on-the-job tasks. The following list summarizes these steps:

1. Establish your objective and determine your reader's attitude and needs
2. Prepare an outline, even if it is only a list of points to be covered in the order you wish to cover them.
3. Write the first draft.
4. Allow a "cooling" period (time for weaknesses to become obvious)
5. Revise the draft.
6. Use proofreading techniques.

These guidelines will help you write a clear, well-organized letter. Keep in mind, however, that one very important element in business letters is the impression they leave on the reader. To convey the right impression-of yourself as well as of your company or organization-you must take particular care with both the tone and the style of your writing.

TONE

Letters are generally written directly to another person who is identified by name. You may or may not know the person, but never forget that you are writing to another human being. For this reason, letters are always more personal than are reports or other forms of business writing. Successful writers find that it helps to imagine their reader sitting across the desk from them as they write; they then write to the reader as if they were talking to him or her in person. This technique helps them keep their language natural. Of course, they adhere to all the guidelines of good writing, including grammar and punctuation. As a letter writer addressing yourself directly to your reader, you are in a good position to take into account your reader's needs. If you ask yourself, "How might I feel if I were the recipient of such a letter? You can gain some insight into the likely needs and feelings of your reader and then tailor your message to fit those needs and feelings. Furthermore, you have a chance to build goodwill for your business or organization. Many companies spend millions of dollars to create a favorable public image. A letter to a customer that sounds impersonal and unfriendly can quickly tarnish that image, but a thoughtful letter that communicates sincerity can greatly enhance it.

Suppose, for example, you are a department store manager who receives a request for a refund from a customer who forgot to enclose the receipt with the request. In a letter to that customer, you might write the following:

EXAMPLE : The sales receipt must be enclosed with the merchandise before we can process a refund.

But if you consider how you might keep the goodwill of the customer, you might word the request this way:

EXAMPLE : Please enclose the sales receipt with the merchandise so that we can send you your refund promptly.

WRITING STYLE

Letter-writing style may vary from informal, in a letter to a close business associate, to formal or restrained, in a letter to someone you do not know. Even if you are writing a business letter to a close associate, you should always follow the rules of standard grammar, spelling and punctuation.

INFORMAL : It worked! The new process is better than we had dreamed.

RESTRAINED :: You will be pleased to know that the new process is more effective than we had expected.

ACCURACY

Since a letter is a written record, it must be accurate. Facts, figures, dates and explanations that are incorrect or misleading may cost time, money and goodwill. Remember that when you sign a letter you are responsible for its contents. Always allow yourself time to review a letter before mailing it. When time permits, ask someone who is familiar with its contents to review an important letter. Listen with an open mind to the criticism of others about what you have said, and make any changes you believe necessary. A second kind of accuracy to check for is the mechanics of writing - punctuation, grammar and spelling. Regardless of who types the letter, if you sign it, you are responsible for its contents and form.

ABBREVIATIONS may be shortened versions of words or they may be formed by the first letters of words.

Abbreviations can be important space savers in business writing where it is often necessary to provide the maximum amount of information in a limited amount of space. Use abbreviations, however, only if you are certain that your reader will understand them. Take into account your reader's level of knowledge of your subject when deciding whether to use abbreviations. Do not use them if they might become an inconvenience to the reader. A good rule of thumb: WHEN IN DOUBT, SPELL IT OUT.

In general, use abbreviations only in charts, tables, graphs, footnotes and other places where space is limited. Normally you should not make your abbreviation for they will probably confuse your reader. Except for commonly used abbreviations, (U.S.A., p.m.), a term to be abbreviated should be spelled out the first time it is used with the abbreviation enclosed in parentheses following the term. Thereafter the abbreviation may be used alone.

EXAMPLE:

The annual report of the International Society of Offshore and Polar Engineers (ISOPE) will be issued next month. In it, the ISOPE will detail research plans for the next year.

Measurements

amp, ampere	hr, hour
atm, atmosphere	in., inch
	kc, kilocycle
bar., barometer	kg, kilogram
bbl, barrel	km, kilometer
bhp, brake horse power	lb, pound
	min, minute
Btu, British thermal unit	oz, ounce
bu, bushel	ppm, parts per million
cal, calorie	pt, pint
cm, centimeter	qt, quart
cos, cosine	rad, radian
ctn, cotangent	rev, revolution
doz or dz, dozen	sec, second
emf or EMF, electromotive force	tan., tangent
F, Fahrenheit	yd, yard
Fig., figure (illustration)	yr, year
Ft, foot or feet	
Hp, horsepower	

Personal Names and Titles

EXAMPLES: Dr. Smith, Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Blake

An abbreviation of a title may follow the name; however, be certain that it does not duplicate a title before the name.

CHANGE Dr. William Smith, Ph.D.
TO Dr. William Smith
OR William Smith, Ph.D.

When addressing correspondence and including names in other documents, you should normally spell out titles.

EXAMPLES: The Honorable Mary J. Holt
Professor Charles Chung
Captain Paul Beckham
Reverend James MacIntosh, D.D.

The following is a list of common abbreviations for personal and professional titles:

Atty.	Attorney
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
B.S.	Bachelor of Science
B.S.E.E.	Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering
D.D.	Doctor of Divinity
D.D.S.	Doctor of Dental Science (or Surgery)
Dr.	Doctor (used with any doctor's degree)
Drs.	Plural of Dr.
Ed.D.	Doctor of Education
Hon.	Honorable
Jr.	Junior (used when a father with the same name is living)
LL.B.	Bachelor of Law
LL.D.	Doctor of Law
M.A.	Master of Arts
M.B.A.	Master of Business Administration
M.D.	Doctor of Medicine
Messrs.	Plural of Mr.
Mr.	Mister (spelled out only in the most formal contexts)
Mrs.	Married woman
Ms.	Woman of unspecified marital status
M.S.	Master of Science
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
Rev.	Reverend
Sr.	Senior (used when a father with the same name is living)

Names of Organizations

Many companies include in their names such terms as **Brothers**, **Incorporated**, **Corporation** or **Company**. If these terms appear as abbreviations in the official company names, use them in their abbreviated forms: **Bros.**, **Inc.**, **Corp.** and **Co.** If not abbreviated in their official names, such terms should be spelled out in most writing other than addresses, footnotes,

bibliographies and list, where abbreviations may be used. A similar guideline applies for use of an **ampersand**

(&): this symbol should be used only if it appears in an official company name. Titles of divisions within organizations, such as Department (Dept.) and Division (Div.) should be abbreviated only when space is limited.

ACRONYMS

An acronym is an abbreviation that is formed by combining the first letter or letters of several words. Acronyms are pronounced as words and are written without periods.

EXAMPLES: **radio detecting and ranging / radar**
Common Business - Oriented Language / COBOL
self-contained underwater breathing apparatus / scuba

An initialism is an abbreviation that is formed by combining the initial letter of each word in a multiword term. Initialisms are pronounced as separate letters.

EXAMPLES: **end of month / e.o.m.**
cash on delivery / c.o.d.

References:

1. Charles T. Brusaw, Gerald J. Alred, Walter E. Oliu (1993), *The Business Writer's Handbook*, New York: St. Martin's Press
2. Stephen Glazier, (1992), *Word Menu*, New York, Random House