

Letter Formats

LETTER FORMATS

Business writers today generally favor the **block** or **simplified** letter formats for two reasons:

1. Moving all elements flush left is easier for typists/word processors.
2. Indenting is unnecessary, since one blank line is routinely left between paragraphs.

The **modified block** and **semiblock** formats feel less formal than the **block** format. The choice of formats for business correspondence should be consistent with the image an organization desires to project.

Using the **simplified format** reduces the potential for the inadvertent use of sexist language, since the salutation is omitted. In the business world, the traditional greeting and closing are unnecessary.

The Formats

Block

Unindented paragraphs. All letter elements are flush with the left margin.

Modified block

Unindented paragraphs. The return address, reference line, date, complimentary closing, and signature block are right of center. Remaining elements are flush with the left margin.

Semiblock

Indented paragraphs (usually an equivalent of five spaces). The return address, reference line, date, complimentary closing, and signature block are right of center. Remaining elements are flush with the left margin.

Simplified

Unindented paragraphs. The salutation and complimentary closing are omitted. All elements are flush with the left margin.

Full Block

All elements of the letter are flush left.

Letter Formats

Block

121 Knox Road #6
Denver, Colorado 80122
March 4, 20--

Linda Hennessee, Managing Editor
World Discovery
1650 K. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Hennessee:

I am applying for the summer editorial internship you listed with the career Development Center at the University of Maryland. I am currently a junior at the University of Denver, with a double major in English and Latin American Studies.

Over the past three years I have gained considerable experience in newspapers and magazine journalism.

I am available for an interview almost any time and can be reached at 303-740-3148. I will be in virginia from April 4 to April 12; if you want to contact me there, the number is 703-555-2006.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Richardson

Letter Formats

Semiblock (Less formal than block)

121 Knox Road #6
Denver, Colorado 80122
March 4, 20--

Linda Hennessee, Managing Editor
World Discovery
1650 K. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Richardson

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Full Block

(Most formal and the style that is usually preferred if the letter is typed on letterhead stationery that gives the return address of the writer or the writer's company.)

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Denver, Colorado 80122
March 4, 20--

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Richardson

Punctuation The open style omits all nonessential punctuation (even omitting the colon or comma after the salutation and the comma after the complimentary closing). The standard style uses minimal punctuation in the letter with a colon or comma after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary closing. (The latter style is preferred for letters in the semiblock format.)

Margins Left and right margins are approximately equal, the spacing depends on the length of the letter. (Long letters have margins approximately one inch in width, while short letters may have wider margins.)

In extremely short letters, wide margins are often combined with double or triple spacing to give a proper appearance to the document.

For proper appearance, the letter should be centered on the page. Margins and spacing must be adjusted for letters of unusual size.