



How to Write a Professional Formal Letter

KS3 ENGLISH

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

What Makes a Letter Formal?

A **formal letter** is a professional way of communicating with someone you don't know well, like a teacher, employer, or business. Unlike texts or casual emails to friends, formal letters follow specific rules about how they look and sound. They show **respect** and **professionalism**, which makes people take your message seriously.

Formal letters are used for important things like applying for jobs, complaining about a problem, or requesting information from an organisation.

Think of it like wearing smart clothes to an interview instead of your school uniform. The presentation matters because it shows you've made an effort.

Getting the Structure Right

Every formal letter needs **four main parts**:

- 1. Your address and the date** go at the top left. Write the full date like **15th January 2024**, not shortened versions.
- 2. The recipient's address** comes next. This is who you're writing to. Include their name, job title, organisation, and address.
- 3. The greeting** should be **Dear Mr Smith** or **Dear Ms Jones**. If you don't know their name, use **Dear Sir or Madam**. Never use **Hi** or **Hey** in formal letters.
- 4. The body and closing** come last. End with **Yours sincerely** (when you've named the person) or **Yours faithfully** (when you haven't), then sign your full name.

Writing the Right Tone

Your **tone** is how your writing sounds. In formal letters, use complete sentences and **standard English**—no slang, abbreviations, or emojis. Be clear and polite, but don't be overly friendly.

Think of it like speaking to a headteacher rather than your best friend. You'd use proper words and a respectful voice, not jokes or casual language.

Keep sentences simple and direct. Break your ideas into **short paragraphs**—one idea per paragraph. This makes your letter easier to read and shows you've thought carefully about what you want to say.

Making Your Letter Stand Out

Use a **standard font** like Arial or Times New Roman in size **11 or 12**. Leave good margins around the edges. Check your spelling and grammar carefully—mistakes make you look careless.

Before sending, read your letter aloud. Does it sound professional? Would you be proud to give it to someone important? If yes, you're ready to send it!