

To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Ohio Standard Connection

Writing Applications

Benchmark C

Produce letters (e.g., business, letters to the editor, job applications) that address audience needs, stated purpose and context in a clear and efficient manner.

Indicator 3

Write letters that state the purpose, make requests or give compliments and use business letter format.

Writing Process

Benchmark A

Generate writing topics and establish a purpose appropriate for the audience.

Indicator 3

State and develop a clear main idea for writing.

Benchmark B

Determine audience and purpose for self-selected and assigned writing tasks.

Indicator 4

Determine a purpose and audience.

Benchmark D

Use revision strategies to improve overall organization, the clarity and consistency of ideas within and among paragraphs and the logic and effectiveness of word choices.

Lesson Summary:

In this lesson students learn the difference between the format of a friendly letter and a business letter. Students work in groups to edit sample business letters before choosing their business letter of choice to write and edit.

Estimated Duration: Five to six class periods

Commentary:

Teachers must teach concise and precise writing, a necessary skill in the information age. Instruction in letter writing effectively develops these skills. Since well-written letters can make very favorable impressions – just as poorly written ones can make the opposite impression – students may be surprised by the impact they can have as skilled letter writers. Field testers of this lesson responded favorably to it. They found the pre-assessment a “...good tool to show how well...” students have progressed and characterized the post-assessment as easy for students to find relevant. As one reviewer stated, the lesson “connects with real life.” Another reviewer noted, “This lesson allows students to see the different [letter writing] formats, share their opinions and ideas, discuss audience types and work cooperatively.”

Pre-Assessment:

- Discuss with students their likes and dislikes of school policies.
- Have the students write a business letter to their principal, requesting a policy change supported with reasons.
- Use the pre-assessment scoring guide to see what prior knowledge students have about the business letter format.

Scoring Guidelines:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 4 points: | Uses all parts of a business letter correctly
States and supports a clear purpose |
| 3 points: | Uses 4-5 parts of a business letter correctly
States purpose and includes some supporting details |
| 2 points: | Uses 2-3 parts of a business letter correctly
Fails to clearly state the purpose and/or includes few supporting details |
| 1 point: | Uses 1 part of a business letter format correctly
Gives no purpose or few to no supporting details |

To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Ohio Standard Connection

Indicators

8. Group related ideas into paragraphs, including topic sentences following paragraph form, and maintain a consistent focus across paragraphs.
12. Add and delete information and details to better elaborate on a stated central idea and to more effectively accomplish purpose.

Benchmark F

Edit to improve fluency, grammar and usage.

Indicator 15

Proofreading writing, edit to improve conventions (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization) and identify and correct fragments and run-ons.

Benchmark G

Apply tools to judge the quality of writing.

Indicator 16

Apply tools (e.g., rubric, checklist and feedback) to judge the quality of writing.

Benchmark H

Prepare writing for publication that is legible, follows an appropriate format and uses techniques such as electronic resources and graphics.

Post-Assessment:

Students write a business letter responding to a prompt. For example, “The Mayor has asked for a student at the school to volunteer as the “Junior Mayor for the Day.” She has requested a letter from all interested students. Write a business letter explaining why you are the person for the job. Make sure the letter states your purpose and includes supporting ideas.” Use the scoring guidelines below as a rubric.

Scoring Guidelines:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 4 points: | Uses correct business letter format
States purpose clearly, while providing supporting details |
| 3 points: | Uses correct grammar, usage and spelling
Uses 4-5 parts of a business letter correctly
States purpose and includes some supporting details |
| 2 points: | Few grammar, usage and spelling errors occur
Uses 2-3 parts of a business letter correctly
Fails to clearly state the purpose and/or includes few supporting details
Several grammar, usage and spelling errors occur |
| 1 point: | Uses 1 part of a business letter format correctly
Gives no purpose or few to no supporting details
Frequent grammar, usage and spelling errors occur |

Instructional Procedures:

Part One

1. Place students in groups of four. Pass out several samples of letters (e.g., letters from local business managers to the district superintendent, letters from the principal or other school personnel to the president of the PTA or letters from relatives).
2. Require students to look for similarities and differences among the letters as well as the purpose of each letter.
3. Students record their answers using chart paper and markers.
4. One member of each group shares the group’s conclusions with the rest of the class.
5. Discuss with students the purpose for using different formats (i.e., business letters as opposed to friendly letters).

To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Ohio Standard Connection

Indicator 17

Prepare for publication (e.g., for display or for sharing with others) writing that follows a format appropriate to the purpose, using techniques such as electronic resources and graphics to enhance the final product.

6. Distribute both letter format sheets to the students. (See *Parts of a Business Letter*, Attachment A, and *Parts of a Friendly Letter*, Attachment B.) Discuss the differences and similarities between friendly letters and business letters.
7. Ask students to consider the differences in the audiences for informal letters and business letters.
8. Return the pre-assessment letters to the students and discuss which format best suits the assignment.
9. Ask students to look over the rubric scoring to see their strengths and weaknesses.

Part Two

10. Divide students into groups of three and select one of three roles: timekeeper, recorder and reporter. The timekeeper watches the time and keeps the students on task. The recorder writes the group's answers down on paper. The reporter shares his or her group's information with the rest of the class.
11. Ask students to take out their copies of the *Parts of a Business Letter*, Attachment A, sample format sheet.
12. Review the six parts of a business letter.
13. Distribute *Sample Business Letter*, Attachment C, to each group. Give the students approximately 15 minutes to correct the business letter. Parts of the letter may be out of order or missing. Require that students also correct any spelling and grammatical errors. After they make corrections, have the students correctly label each part of the business letter.
14. Afterwards, each group's reporter explains to the rest of the class one or two corrections.
15. Once each group has taken a turn to share its corrections, review any other necessary changes with the whole class.

Instructional Tip:

For the visual learner, use an overhead transparency of the sample business letter to make the corrections. As the groups share their corrections, write them on the overhead for the students to see.

Part Three

16. Review with students the *Types of Business Letters*, Attachment D, information sheet.
17. From the sheet students select one type of letter that they feel most comfortable writing.



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

18. Ask the students to write a short letter (one page is appropriate) to the person of their choice following the business letter format.
19. After drafting their letters, students form pairs in which they offer each other suggestions and corrections.
20. The students complete editing and revising their letters as a homework assignment.

Instructional Tip:

Use computers for the final draft of the business letters. Require students to staple the final draft to the rough draft to show the corrections and revisions. Allow ample time for students to read and correct each other's work.

Part Four

21. Meet with students individually with their business letters. Review their corrections and their original work. Discuss any questions or misconceptions they have on business letter writing.

Instructional Tip:

Students often use the *Types of Business Letters*, Attachment D, information sheet in this lesson. Collect these sheets after the lesson or suggest the students keep a copy for reference. When administering the post-assessment, if the suggested prompt (Junior Mayor for the Day) is not used, remember to keep the letter writing experience relevant or rooted in the real world.

Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Use ability grouping for students who are struggling with the concepts and performance expectations that are the focus of the lesson and the standard benchmarks. Place the weaker students with stronger ones for peer guidance and tutoring.
- Students who quickly demonstrate they can exceed the standard may act as editors of the letters written by their peers. Or invite these students to collect an assortment of letters to the editor and compare them to the two types featured in this lesson. Supplement this activity with an investigation in which students identify an issue about which they have strong feelings. Then, they conduct research on the issue and write a letter to an editor of a newspaper or magazine supported with the results of their investigation. (Supervise students using the Internet for research.)

Extensions:

- Students write letters to the editor of a local or school newspaper.
- Students write letters of request or inquiry to local businesses or companies.
- Start a class newspaper and have the students manage it.

Home Connection:

Students write a letter of opinion to their parents trying to convince them to change a house rule.



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Content Area: Social Studies

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Methods

Benchmark: B. Use a variety of sources to organize information and draw inferences.

When writing letters to businesses, students need to use sources to gather information to organize their opinions.

Standard: Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities

Benchmark: A. Explain how citizens take part in civic life in order to promote the common good.

For the post-assessment activity, have students demonstrate their knowledge of this standard by convincing the mayor they are the most qualified to shadow as the Junior Mayor for the Day.

Materials and Resources:

The inclusion of a specific resource in any lesson formulated by the Ohio Department of Education should not be interpreted as an endorsement of that particular resource, or any of its contents, by the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education does not endorse any particular resource. The Web addresses listed are for a given site's main page, therefore, it may be necessary to search within that site to find the specific information required for a given lesson. Please note that information published on the Internet changes over time, therefore the links provided may no longer contain the specific information related to a given lesson. Teachers are advised to preview all sites before using them with students.

For the teacher: attachments A-D, chart paper, markers, transparencies and an overhead projector

For the students: paper, pens, pencils

Vocabulary:

- body
- business letter
- closing
- friendly letter
- heading
- inside address
- salutation
- signature

Technology Connections:

- Students use the computer to type their business letters as well as research information they use in the body of the letter.
- A classroom newspaper can be created on the computer using a newspaper publishing program.



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Research Connections:

Arter, Judith and Jay McTighe. *Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom: Using Performance Criteria for Assessing and Improving Student Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001.

A *holistic rubric* gives a single score or rating for an entire product or performance based on an overall impression of a student's work. An *analytical trait rubric* divides a product or performance into essential traits or dimensions so they may be judged separately—one analyzes a product or performance for essential traits. A separate score is provided for each trait.

Calkins, L. M. "When children want to punctuate: Basic skills belong in context." *Language Arts*, 57, (1980): 567-73.

Decades of research demonstrate that teaching grammar as a school subject does not improve most students' writing, nor [does it improve] even the "correctness" of their writing. What works better is teaching selected aspects of grammar (including sentence variety and style, punctuation, and usage) in the context of students' writing – that is, when they are revising and editing their writing.

For improving editing skills, it is most effective and efficient to teach only the grammatical concepts that are critically needed for editing writing, and to teach these concepts and their terms mostly through mini lessons and writing conferences, particularly while helping students edit their writing.

Marzano, Robert J., Jane E. Pollock and Debra Pickering. *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001.

Cooperative learning grouping has a powerful effect on student learning. This grouping includes face-to-face interaction.

Setting objectives and providing feedback establish a direction for learning and a way to monitor progress. This provides focus on learning targets and specific information to allow the student to make needed adjustments during the learning process, resulting in increased student learning.

Zemelman, Steven, Harvey Daniels and Arthur Hyde. *Best Practice: New Standards of Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

Among the body of findings from Zemelman's, Daniels' and Hyde's research are a handful of insights into best practices in writing instruction. These practices include but are not limited to: helping students find real purposes for writing, realizing effective writing programs involve the entire writing process, giving students real audiences and a classroom context of shared learning and teaching grammar and mechanics in context at the editing stage of students' writing.

Attachments:

Attachment A, *Parts of a Business Letter*



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Attachment B, *Parts of a Friendly Letter*

Attachment C, *Sample Business Letter*

Attachment D, *Types of Business Letters*

To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Attachment A Parts of a Business Letter

1. Heading

It includes your street address, city, state and zip code. The heading is located in the upper left-hand corner of the paper. The current date appears directly under the heading.

2. Inside Address

It includes the name and title of the letter recipient, the name of the business or office, the street address, city, state and zip code. The inside address is located below the heading.

3. Salutation

This is the greeting. It appears below the inside address and usually begins with “Dear.” It is followed by a colon(:).

4. Body

This is the main part of the letter. Here is where you convey information and ideas using paragraphs. The body is also where you ask questions.

The paragraphs are written without indentations, but spaces are used between the paragraphs.

5. Closing

The part of the letter where you say good-bye is called the closing. This part is located in the lower left-hand side of the paper. Only the first word of a closing is capitalized. You might use closings like “Sincerely” or “Sincerely yours.”

6. Signature

It includes your first and last name. Your full name is typed four spaces below the closing and your first and last names are signed above your typed name.

1800 Crunch St.
Choco, OH 43606
January 1, 2004

Cookie Monster
The Cookie Place
123 Lotta Chips Lane
Golden Brown, OH 54321

Dear Mr. Monster:

I am a cookie expert and have tasted many types of fantastic chocolate chip cookies. I have come to the realization that the best cookies for your company are those that are crunchy, filled with chips and a golden brown coloring.

I have spent hours in my kitchen perfecting the perfect chocolate chip cookie, and I am offering you the chance to try one and decide if you would like to begin selling them in your store.

I will be in your town next week, and I plan to visit, bringing you a dozen of my wonderful cookies. I will stop in and will convince you in one bite how wonderful they are. I look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely yours,

Chip Johnson

Chip Johnson

To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Attachment B Parts of a Friendly Letter

Friendly letters share stories and information with friends and family.

1. Heading:

It includes your street address, city, state, zip code and date. The heading is located in the upper right-hand corner of the paper.

Sample Friendly Letter

2. Salutation:

This is the letter's greeting. It appears below the heading and begins at the left-hand margin of the paper. It usually begins with "Dear," followed by the person's name to whom you are writing, followed by a comma.

321 Baa Baa St.
Cottonwood, OH 54321
February 3, 2000

Dear Mary,

3. Body:

This is the main part of the letter. Here is where you convey information and ideas using paragraphs. The body is also the place where you ask questions.

Hello! I hope you are doing well. I saw you today walking your lamb to school. You seemed so happy while you were singing songs. Everywhere you went, your lamb seemed to follow. How do you keep him from running away?

I have a hard time keeping my sheep with me. They seem to run away often, and I cannot ever seem to find them. Can I please come over so you can teach me your secret?

4. Closing:

The part of the letter where you say good-bye is called the closing. This part is located in the lower right-hand corner of the paper directly below the heading. It is always followed by a comma. Only the first word of a closing is capitalized. You might use closings like, "Sincerely yours," "Best wishes," or "Your friend."

I hope to hear from you soon.

Your friend,
Little Bo Peep

5. Signature:

The last part of the friendly letter is for a signature. It can include your first and last names or just your first name.



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Attachment C Sample Business Letter

540 Golden Rd.
outer edge, MN 54321

January 2, 2000

Papa Bear
The Three Bears
123 Forest Way
Deep Wood, MN 54321

Dear Mr. Bear,

I am planning a trip to your community. I would like to move in your area and I was hoping I could invite myself over to your place. I love log cabins and I need a large house. My grandmother had problems with animals in her forest and I want her to com live with me.

I promise to not take too long as I look around. I am especially interested in the kitchen, the living room, and the bedrooms. If you prefer to not be home, I do not mind inviting myself in.

Please send a quick reply. I will be staying at the above address. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours:

Goldilocks



To Whom It May Concern – Grade Five

Attachment D Types of Business Letters

We write business letters to ask for information so we can get something done or to solve a problem. We also write business letters to offer opinions, to persuade someone to act in our best interest or to convey information.

Letter to the Editor or an Official

- A letter sent to an editor of a newspaper or magazine is often used to publish an opinion about a situation.
- A letter written to accompany a job application is usually sent to a specific person or official who is in charge of decision-making.

Letter of Request or Inquiry

When a writer is trying to locate information about a topic or to solve a problem, a letter of request or inquiry is used and may be sent to a variety of officials.

Letter of Complaint or Compliment

A letter of complaint is usually written by someone who is unhappy about something and written to someone in a company or organization who might do something about it. Letters of compliment may be written to the same people but it expresses, instead, how happy or pleased the writer is with services received or with a product.

Letters of Opinion or Information

Letters of opinion are mostly used to share and express strong feelings or ideas on a topic or situation to persuade someone to change his or her way of thinking. A letter of information may also be used to express strong views or ideas on a topic or situation, but mostly it tries to explain things.