

3: SAMPLE BUSINESS LETTERS

Effective Business Letter Tips

Effective business letters have some common characteristics that make them look acceptable and sound professional. Review the following tips before you write any business letter, and make sure the basics are in place.

Business Letterhead

Use your business letterhead for all business correspondence, regardless of how brief. It will provide the reader with a professional image, as well as the essential information about your business, including the business name, address and phone number.

Paper Quality

Most business letterhead is printed on 20 pound paper or heavier. A more professional image is communicated with the use of the heavier paper.

Typed vs. Handwritten

Given today's technology, the more professional letter is definitely typed or word-processed. Save handwritten notes for your personal communications.

Format

There are several acceptable business letter formats, and the choice is up to the writer. Be sure the format is attractive, consistent and easy to read. All letters should contain the date, inside address (complete name and address of the addressee, including title) and proper salutation. Informational correspondence that is considered "memo" should still contain the date and the inside address, with the salutation changed to "To:", followed by the name of whomever the correspondence is to be directed.

Style

All letters and memos should be written in standard English. Write as you talk, but be sure you use complete sentences and correct grammar. Try to be concise and clear in your language, and avoid very long sentences and paragraphs.

Appropriate Close

Most business letters use the standard "Sincerely," close, which is fine. Avoid overly emotional closes in your business correspondence; but choosing an alternative that more closely fits your style is acceptable.

Signature

Based on the degree of formality, you can decide whether to sign your full name or just your first name. Your full name including titles or degrees earned can be typed, and you can still make the impact less formal by signing only your first name.

Employment Matters

Employment matters take up a tremendous amount of an entrepreneur's time. Having a few simple letters ready to customize for specific needs can save you wrestling with that "how did I word that last time" syndrome. The following letters should be put on business letterhead, and are simple and straightforward, yet may be customized and lengthened to fit your needs.

First, the **Request for Reference From Prior Employer** can help you get vital information about an applicant you are considering for hire. Often times a written request is more credible than a phone call. If there is more specific information you think you need, add it in—but be aware that most prior employers aren't anxious to take too much time providing anybody with information about someone they no longer employ, so **KEEP IT SIMPLE**—and short. Including the **Authorization to Release Reference Information** with the Request letter will increase your chances of receiving any information. Have applicants fill out this **Authorization** letter at the time of interview if you are interested in them at all.

While "employment contracts" are being discouraged among many of the small business legal experts, an **Employment Offer** letter can serve as an acknowledgment of the basic parameters under which someone is being hired, and can establish the "at-will" employment relationship. Before adding more details to the letter, check with your legal advisor.

Even though rejection letters aren't the most fun items to receive OR send, as a courtesy to applicants who took their time to interview with you, send a simple note similar to the **Rejection Letter to Unsuccessful Applicants**. Just the fact that you took the time to write to an interviewee is impressive—and, you never know when you may want to reconsider that individual in the future. This simple courtesy could go a long way to keeping doors open that you may need to pass through later.

Recourse for improper termination is becoming a very real issue, even in the *very small business* world. The **Notice of Deficient Work Performance** letter is one that should be used judiciously to document meetings with employees. Hold the meeting, then use this letter to record the meeting contents (both for your and the employee's future reference). Keep a copy of each meeting letter in the employee's file. And insist that the signed "acknowledgment of receipt" copy of the letter be returned to you. Even with "at will" employees, you will have the documentation you need to address potential future issues. You can easily modify this notice to be a "*Final* Notice of Deficient Work Performance," including appropriate consequences of non-corrective action, if the situation warrants.

Request for Reference from Prior Employer

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [employer name]:

We have received an application from one of your [current/
former] employees, _____, seeking the
position of _____ with our firm.

It would be very helpful if you would provide the
following information concerning _____:

Dates of employment with your company:

Job description and rate of compensation:

Performance evaluation:

Reason for termination:

Any other pertinent information:

A form authorizing your release of this information by
_____ is enclosed. Please indicate whether your
reference information should be kept confidential.

Thank you for your help. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

H.M.Smith

Authorization to Release Reference Information

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

I have been informed that _____ is
seeking employment reference information about me.

I, _____, authorize _____
to release, without limitation, information concerning my
employment.

Employee

Employment Offer

HMS, Inc.
1111 East Street - Hometown, USA
(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [applicant name],

It is my pleasure to offer you employment in the capacity of _____ with our firm. The proposed starting date of your employment is _____.

Your compensation will be \$_____ per [week/month/year]; in addition you will be entitled to the following "employee benefits":

This offer is for employment AT WILL. It may be terminated either by you or by us for any reason at any time.

Please acknowledge your acceptance of this offer by signing and dating below, and return this letter to me by (date) _____ at the address above.

Congratulations on your selection.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Agreed and Accepted: _____

Date: _____

Rejection Letter to Unsuccessful Applicants

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [applicant name],

Thank you for meeting with us regarding the position of _____ . We were very fortunate to have you and several other highly qualified applicants interview with us. After extensive consideration, we have selected another candidate, and the offer was accepted.

The very best of luck to you in finding a position that will utilize your skills and talents to the fullest. Again, we thank you for taking the time to visit with us.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Notice of Deficient Work Performance

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

To: [employee name]

This letter confirms our discussion on _____, 20____, at _____ concerning unacceptable work performance in the following areas:

It was suggested that you take the following action to improve your performance:

I hope that this constructive information will help you to improve your performance and thereby return you to good standing within our Company.

A copy of this notice has been attached. Please sign that copy where indicated and return to me promptly.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Receipt Acknowledged: _____
Employee

Date: _____

Buying and Selling Goods and Services

The paperwork trail relating to the buying and selling of goods and services can be made much simpler if you have some standard letters and memos to accomplish the various tasks involved, whether you are the seller or the purchaser. All of the following letters should be prepared on your business letterhead. Following the basic format and then customizing to fit the particular circumstances will save you time and effort, particularly in this “buying and selling” area that tends to have a significant number of transactions. Good documentation is essential to the financial realm of your business, allowing you to track credits due, purchases made and the inevitable discrepancies that occur between buyer and seller.

The **Request for Bid** asks your potential supplier for a firm price on goods or services you want to purchase. A formal bid obligates your supplier to the prices quoted through a specified expiration time. While this is not a process you would go through for every order placed, it can be a very useful price and item comparison tool for larger orders. Follow up the process with the courtesy of a **Bid Rejection Notice** to those potential suppliers who took the time to send you a bid—and, of course, a **Bid Award** letter to the successful bidder, with the appropriate purchase order attached.

The **Order Confirmation** letter is a good way to avoid discrepancies pertaining to orders placed over the phone. It confirms the items, quantities, price and terms of the order, as well as providing you and the supplier with the proper paper trail—a purchase order. The **Order Acceptance** letter is the supplier’s equivalent of the confirmation letter, again reducing the possibility of misunderstanding of a verbal order.

Placing the order for goods or services is often the easiest step—then you wait for them, receive them, inspect them, accept or reject them in part or in whole! Remember, documenting the steps will help you keep track of your inventory, and therefore your dollars. The **Delivery Receipt** acknowledges that the goods you ordered were received and are acceptable to keep. Make sure you have enough time to properly inspect your order before issuing this receipt.

Back-orders can slow down the shipment of all other items on the order—use the **Cancellation Notice—Back-Orders** letter to cancel items you can’t or don’t want to wait for so the rest of the order can be shipped. Similarly, waiting for an order for an excessive period of time can damage your cash flow—if you don’t have merchandise on the shelf to sell, you can’t have any cash “flowing.” Monitor your purchase orders, and if a supplier has not shipped within the specified time-frame on your purchase order, find out the reason. If the supplier still cannot ship within a reasonable time, use the **Cancellation Notice—Failure to Deliver** letter to cancel the order, and find a supplier that can meet your needs.

As a buyer, you are not under obligation to keep damaged or non-conforming goods. Use the **Rejection of Shipment Notice**, the **Non-Conforming Goods Notice**, and the **Acceptance of Non-Conforming Goods Notice** to inform the supplier of your intended actions. The Uniform Commercial Code provides the purchaser with the option of rejecting or retaining all or part of damaged or non-conforming goods. If a price adjustment cannot be agreed upon, the purchaser still has the option of

rejection. Use these letters to document your intentions—and remember, keeping goods that are not what you want or need takes away from the dollars you could be spending on usable inventory.

Often, special order items cause a buyer to be more patient than waiting for “normal” inventory. But even special orders should be delivered on a timely basis, particularly if they have been paid for in advance by either the buyer or the end-use (customer). If phone calls just don’t seem to get the seller’s attention, try the **Demand for Goods** letter. On the other side, the seller might use the **Notification of Non-Shipment** letter, which will at least explain why an order has not been shipped.

The supplier who must stop the shipment of an order needs to notify the shipping company of the required action. Use the **Stop Shipment Order** to inform the transporter not to deliver and to return your goods to you.

Finally, given all of the possible adjustments to orders, including some of those described above, it’s no wonder that statements from suppliers often reflect different amounts owed than the seller’s records show. Use the **Disputed Balance Letter** to begin the communication of identifying the correct balance.

Request for Bid

HMS, Inc.
1111 East Street - Hometown, USA
(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [potential seller]

Please provide us with a bid on the following items:

<u>Item (Description)</u>	<u>Stock #</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Total Price</u>
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____	\$ _____

Please quote your bid delivery to us FOB the following location: _____.

Please specify the date through which the bid price is effective and firm.

This bid must be returned by _____, 20____.

Thank you,

H.M. Smith
President

Bid Rejection Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [potential seller (bidder)]

Thank you for submitting your bid dated ____, 20 ____. We appreciate the time and effort it took to provide us with the information.

Unfortunately, another bidder [it is optional to name the successful bidder] is being awarded the purchase order. Our decision was based on several factors, but [price/quality/other] was the primary determinant.

We would like to continue to include you in future bid opportunities. Again, thank you for your effort.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Bid Award

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [successful bidder]

It is our pleasure to award you the purchase order on the items you bid to us on _____, 20____. A copy of your bid and of our purchase order # _____ for items specified is attached. Please note quantities, specifications, prices, ship dates and FOB point as outlined on the purchase order, and notify us of any discrepancies or questions by _____, 20 ____.

We look forward to doing business with you.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Order Confirmation

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

This letter confirms the order for [products/services] placed with you by telephone on _____, 20____. Purchase order # _____ authorizing the items, quantities, prices and terms we discussed is attached.

If any of the terms of the purchase order are not acceptable to you, please advise me within five (5) days; otherwise, we will anticipate delivery as specified on the order.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Order Acceptance

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [purchaser]

We are in receipt of your purchase order # _____. This confirms that your order is accepted with the following exceptions:

[Items would be listed that are out of stock, back-ordered, no longer available, with possible substitutions or notations of cancellation.]

[Service modifications could also be listed.]

Unless we receive written notice from you within _____ days, we will fill the order subject to the exceptions listed above.

Your business is truly appreciated.

Thank you,

H.M. Smith

Delivery Receipt

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

We acknowledge the receipt of the items listed on the attached invoice or form. We have inspected said goods, and accept them as being complete and without defect.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Cancellation Notice—Back-Orders

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

You notified us that the following items on our purchase order #_____, dated _____, 20____, are not in stock and have been back-ordered:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please cancel [all/the marked] items back-ordered and ship the remainder of the order immediately. Please be sure that the invoice sent with the shipped goods reflects the cancellation of back-ordered items as well.

[NOTE: If only part of the back-ordered items are being canceled, add the following:

Please ship the remainder of the non-canceled back-ordered items as they become available, but prior to _____, 20____. If they are not going to be available until after that specified date, please notify us again.]

Thank you,

H.M. Smith

Cancellation Notice—Failure to Deliver

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

Please refer to our purchase order # _____ dated _____,
20____, which specified a delivery date of _____, 20____.

As we have not received these items in a timely manner, we
hereby cancel said order in its entirety, pursuant to the
specifications in our purchase order.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Rejection of Shipment Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

On _____, 20____, we received items ordered from you on our purchase order # _____. The items are rejected for the following reason(s):

- Merchandise was delivered in damaged condition (see attached explanation).
- Items delivered are defective (see attached explanation).
- The order was not delivered within acceptable delivery timeframe (see copy of our purchase order # _____ attached).
- Merchandise delivered was not what was specified on purchase order (see attached explanation).
- The prices on your invoice are not in compliance with prices on the purchase order accepted by your firm.
- Backorders are not acceptable—order was to be shipped complete or not at all.
- Other—see attached explanation.

Upon receipt of your shipping instructions, we will return the merchandise at your expense. This rejection does not limit or waive any other legal rights we may have.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Non-Conforming Goods Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

We are in receipt of merchandise ordered under our purchase order # _____ and shipped on your invoice # _____ on _____, 20____. Some of the merchandise that was shipped does not conform with the specifications on our purchase order, as outlined below:

These non-conforming items are not acceptable. Therefore, we will return them to you at your expense. Please issue a corresponding credit/refund to us promptly.

If you have a preference for the form of shipment to return these goods to us, please notify us within the next 5 days.

Thank you,

H.M. Smith

Acceptance of Non-Conforming Goods Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

We are in receipt of merchandise ordered under our purchase order # _____ and shipped on your invoice # _____ on _____, 20____. Some of the merchandise that was shipped does not conform to the specifications on our purchase order, or is defective or damaged, as outlined below:

Although the items listed are non-conforming, defective or damaged, we will accept them provided that you allow us a credit in the amount of \$_____, as per our conversation. Please issue the appropriate credit, or reissue a new invoice reflecting the appropriate price adjustment.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Demand for Goods

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [seller]

We issued our purchase order # _____ to you on _____,
20____, specifying a shipping date of _____ (see copy of
purchase order attached). You accepted our order [OR-By our
check # _____ dated _____, 20____, we paid for this order]
in full. To date we have not received the items specified.
Demand is hereby made for delivery of said goods.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Notification of Non-Shipment

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [purchaser]

We are holding shipment of an order received from you on
purchase order # _____
dated _____, 20____, for the following reason(s):

- Non-payment.
- No shipping directions were provided—please advise.
- Your account is on credit hold—please contact our Accounts Receivable Dept.
- The following items are on back-order:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Please notify us if a partial shipment is acceptable—your order indicates “ship complete only”.
- Other:

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Stop Shipment Order

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [shipping company]

Please refer to the shipping order enclosed. You are in the process of delivering goods for us to the following addressee:

You are hereby directed to *not deliver* items shown on the attached shipping order—return the order to us. We will pay for the shipping charges for the return to us. No transfer of title has occurred. The customer has not been given any bill of lading.

Thank you for your help,

H.M. Smith

Disputed Balance Letter

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [supplier]

We are in receipt of your account statement dated _____, 20____, showing a balance due of \$_____. The balance due is incorrect because of the following reason(s):

- Items billed on invoice # _____ have not been received.
- Your statement does not reflect the payment made _____, 20____, in the amount of \$ _____ via our check # _____.
- Your statement does not reflect credit for the following items returned:
- Invoice # _____ dated _____, 20____, was priced incorrectly as outlined:
- Other:

Please adjust our account balance appropriately. If there are questions about the items outlined above, don't hesitate to call us.

Thank you,

H.M. Smith

Credit and Collection Issues

The current business environment demands that proper attention be paid to collecting monies that are legitimately due, and carefully monitoring to whom and for how much you extend “on account” privileges. The following practical letters may be helpful in this sometimes “sticky” process by providing you with standardized wording for unfortunate, and often uncomfortable, situations regarding customer credit. Documentation of correspondence with those who owe you money is *essential* if you have the need to follow up with legal procedures due to uncollectability. All correspondence should be sent on your business letterhead, with copies kept permanently in your account files.

Not all “bad checks” are written by criminals—and banks even occasionally make a mistake! An appropriate method of notifying and correcting the receipt of an uncollectible check must be utilized, even if it is embarrassing because you know the customer. Often, a phone call will be the most appropriate notification—however, use of the **Bad or Returned Check Letter** format might be more professional, and will provide you with the written documentation you may need in the future.

If you intend to extend credit privileges to your customers, you need the proper tools to monitor the credit and the open accounts. The **Credit References Letter** politely opens the door for your potential customer, while the **Credit Application** (for a business) provides you with the real information you need to evaluate the validity of opening the account. (Please note: there are many standardized credit application forms for businesses and individuals available at stationary or office supplies stores.)

If you are uncomfortable extending credit after reviewing a credit application, you still want to invite potential customers to utilize your goods or services, so politely inform them of their C.O.D. status using the **Notice of C.O.D.** letter. If you are subsequently asked to provide an explanation of your decision, use the **Explanation of Credit Rejection** letter.

Once open accounts are established, careful monitoring of their payment status is critical to cash flow control. Determine your “tolerance” for how overdue you will allow an account to become before using the **Notice of Overdue Account** letter. Use of this letter can actually help set the tone early on that the terms of the open account are expected to be upheld. Generally accepted credit business practices call for “three strikes before you’re out”—so use the **Account Past Due—Second Notice** and **Overdue Account—Final Notice** letters to establish your procedures. Please remember, if you *say* you are going to send an account to collection, you must be prepared to *do so*.

Finally, by properly pursuing overdue accounts, you can often work out an agreement that will get you paid, although maybe not all at once. Use the **Installment Agreement to Pay Overdue Accounts** letter to document that there is an agreed amount owed and a plan to repay it.

Bad or Returned Check Letter

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [check writer],

Your check # _____ dated _____, 20____, written to us in the amount of \$ _____ has been returned to us by the bank marked [account closed, non-sufficient funds, etc.]. (See copy of check enclosed).

We realize mistakes happen, and wanted to notify you immediately so that you can appropriately correct the situation with us and with the bank.

Please send a certified bank check or money order in the amount of \$ _____, which is the amount of the returned check plus our \$ _____ returned check charge. You may also stop by to correct the situation, if that is more convenient. We will return the original check to you upon receipt of replacement funds.

Failure to respond to this notice with replacement funds within 10 days will force us to proceed with collection procedures.

Our thanks for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

encl.: check copy

Credit References Letter

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [customer]

Thank you for your recent order #_____, received _____,
20____. As this is your first order with us, we are enclosing
an application for credit. Please complete this form and
return it to us by mail or to the FAX number listed above. We
will promptly review the application to avoid delaying your
shipment. This information will be kept strictly confidential
for our internal use only.

We thank you for your order, and look forward to a positive
working relationship.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

encl.: credit application

Credit Application— for a Business

ABC Toys Import Inc. 300 Main Street San Francisco, CA 94000 914-327-8907			
<h1>Credit Application</h1>			
Date			
General Information			
Name of Business			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Type of Ownership		<input type="checkbox"/> Proprietorship <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify):	
Federal ID#		or Social Security #	
President/Partner(s)/Owner(s)			
Name			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Business Phone		Home Phone	
Name			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Business Phone		Home Phone	
Date Business Started		D & B Rating	
Bank Reference			
Bank Name		Bank Officer	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone			
Account(s) #			
Please list three (3) trade references			
Company Name		Contact	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone			
Company Name		Contact	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone			
Company Name		Contact	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone			
The above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge			
Owner/Fiscal Officer		Date	

Notice of C.O.D.

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [customer]

Thank you very much for your purchase order #_____, dated _____, 20____ (copy attached). We are unable to extend open account credit to you at this time. We will be happy, however, to process your order for C.O.D. shipment. Please notify us within five days of receipt of this notice if you choose to cancel this order. Otherwise, you may expect a C.O.D. shipment from us in a timely manner and according to your specified ship_____ date on your purchase order.

Thank you for choosing to do business with us.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

encl.: copy P.O. # _____

Explanation of Credit Rejection

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

To: [customer]

We have received your request for an explanation of why your application for credit dated _____, 20____, was refused. Our decision was made based on the following information:

If you feel the information we received is inaccurate, please don't hesitate to contact us. We appreciate your patronage, and look forward to a continued positive business relationship.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Notice of Overdue Account

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [customer],

A review of your account shows that a statement was sent to you on _____, 20____, showing a balance due of \$_____. To date we have not received any payment on that account, which is now _____ days past due.

If your records show that we are in error and payment was made, please call or drop us a note with the payment information so we can correct our records.

If payment has not been made, we would appreciate a prompt payment response correcting the situation; or call us so we may discuss partial payment options.

Your patronage is appreciated, as is your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Account Past Due—Second Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [customer]:

On _____, 20____, we sent you a notice reminding you of your past due account with us in the amount of \$_____. To date, we have not received a payment on your account, nor have we had any correspondence from you.

Once again, we must request immediate action from you. Please remit the amount due on your account in full by _____, 20____. If circumstances prevent you from making immediate payment, or from being able to pay in full, please contact us by phone or by mail so we can attempt to work out the problem with you.

Failure to respond to this notice will leave us no alternative but to pursue collection options, at which point you will be legally obligated for the amount due on your account *plus* any legal or collection fees that may be incurred.

Please let us hear from you upon receipt of this notice.

Thank you,

H.M. Smith

Overdue Account—Final Notice

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [customer]:

We have sent you two prior notices dated _____, 20____, and _____, 20____, regarding your past due account with us in the amount of \$_____. To date, we have not received payment on this account, nor have you corresponded with us.

We will be turning this account over for collection on _____, 20____. This is your final opportunity to avoid that action. Please contact us immediately so that we can discuss the problem. Failure to respond to this final notice may result in additional costs to you, including the account balance *plus* any legal or collection costs incurred.

Your attention to this matter is essential, and in your best interest.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

Installment Agreement to Pay Overdue Account

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [customer],

Thank you for responding to our account notice dated _____, 20__ regarding your past due account. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

This letter will confirm our agreement reached on _____, 20__. You acknowledge the overdue amount of \$_____ on your account with us. You agree to pay [weekly, bi-monthly, monthly] payments in the amount of \$_____ until the account is paid in full. You further agree that the first payment will be made on or before _____, 20__. Until your account is paid in full, you understand that additional charges to your account will not be allowed, and that the account will be reviewed for continued open credit with us once this past due obligation is paid in full.

Please understand that our flexibility is being extended only because we expect complete commitment to this payment schedule. We ask that you sign the enclosed copy of this letter and return it to us with or prior to your first scheduled payment.

Once again, thank you for taking this positive step to correct an unfortunate situation.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith

General Useful Letters

As a voting citizen and a member of the business community, you have a need and a responsibility to inform local and federal legislators of your concerns and desires. The success of your business could be influenced by the laws passed in your state capital or in Washington, so let your views be known. As a business person, you are highly influential in the election process, so make it a habit to keep your legislators aware of actions you support *and* those about which you have concern.

Your local officials are also employed to work for you, but rarely know who “you” are. Expressing your concerns on a local level can add to their effectiveness, and bring them more in touch with the business attitudes on the street.

Some tips on writing to a legislator or local official include:

- State your position or concern clearly in the first paragraph
- Be brief and specific
- Focus on public interest, rather than on just your personal interests
- Don't attack the *person* if you are disgruntled—express displeasure at the *policy*

Letter to a Legislator — Sample

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear Senator XXX,

I want you to know how pleased I am with your recent backing of the Family Heritage Preservation Act and its related bills.

As a small family business owner, I have great concerns about the future of my business as it relates to my family. More importantly, as a small business owner in Wyoming, I appreciate that your position helps to protect over 50% of our small business population by focusing on the problems involved in passing businesses on to future generations. Your work is not only commendable, but vital to our state.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help in assuring the passage of this legislation. I truly extend my appreciation to you for your focused work in the Senate.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith
President, H.M.S., Inc.

Letter to a Local Official—Sample

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear [local official's name]:

I would like to express concern about the application for variance on zoning of HIJ Company relating the their proposed building at 111 W. 111 St.

I own a home on the block in question, and have enjoyed a friendly, quiet neighborhood for ten years. All of the surrounding property is residential, and in speaking with other homeowners, we would like to keep our residential area intact.

We are particularly opposed to this variance because the proposed usage of the building is for a high traffic retail operation open from 8 a.m. to midnight. As this is a residential neighborhood, parking and traffic problems would result, jeopardizing the safety of our children and creating security problems.

I believe these are real and significant concerns. I urge you to reject the application for variance for HIJ, and encourage them to locate in a more appropriate commercial area. Preserving the few residential neighborhoods we have left should be important.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith
President, H.M.S., Inc.

General Letter of Apology

Every business receives complaints, some legitimate and some not. Right or wrong, the disgruntled customer needs to hear from you—therefore, a general non-committal letter of apology might soothe the malcontent, and give you time to look into the situation as a valid concern.

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear:

Thank you for your recent letter, pointing out that it took three hours to respond to your inquiry about availability of the Nike Shark shoe. We can only improve and learn by responding to constructive critique such as yours.

I apologize if the time delay caused you any problems. In the meantime, I am looking into alternative ways to efficiently answer phone availability questions without giving out hasty, incorrect information to our customers.

Sincerely,

H.M. Smith
President, H.M.S., Inc.

Acknowledgment of a Complaint

Mistakes will be made, even by good companies. Ignoring, covering-up or denying errors will go a long way to ruin good customer relations. Learn to acknowledge complaints with a straightforward letter that assures your customer you are seeking to correct the problem or, at least, are aware of the error and concerned about its effect, and are committed to doing whatever follow-up is appropriate.

HMS, Inc.

1111 East Street - Hometown, USA

(111) 555-1111

[Date]

[AddresseeXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Theirtown, USA]

Dear:

I received your letter dated _____, 20____. Your letter describes an error that was made by my company, and I am currently investigating the cause.

Please know that I will do my best to resolve the situation to our mutual satisfaction, and to prevent such a situation from happening again. I appreciate the fact that you took the time to bring this to my attention—after all, that is truly the only way mistakes can be corrected.

I apologize for any inconvenience this has caused, and will contact you as soon as the situation has been resolved.

Most sincerely,

H.M. Smith
President, H.M.S., Inc.

