

# Friendly and Business Letters

**Skill:** Write meaningful messages and use the correct formats for friendly and business letters.

## Overview

Friendly letters are written to close friends who usually share common experiences and a knowledge of the same topics. In such cases, writers do not need to include a wealth of details. The reader is able to draw on the common knowledge and experiences to fill in the gaps and construct meaning. On the other hand, business letters are usually written to unknown readers who may not share the writer's knowledge and experiences. The more distant the relationship between reader and writer, the more explicit the writing needs to be (Kaufer, D. S., & Carley, K., 1994).

## Model

<b>Friendly Letter</b>	
<b>HEADING</b>	123 Oak Street Boston, MA 02000 July 7, 2003
<b>SALUTATION</b>	Dear Sue,
<b>BODY</b>	I had a great time at your beach house. Seeing the fireworks over the bay was better than seeing them in the high school field. Give me a call when you get home next week. We can go to the mall. Did you ever find Billy's hamster?
<b>CLOSING</b>	Your best friend,
<b>SIGNATURE</b>	Gina

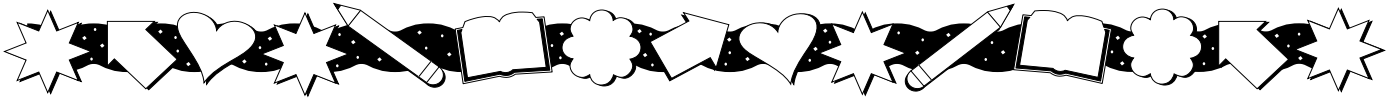
## How to Teach

There are two important components of letter writing: purpose, which is to communicate ideas, and format.

### Friendly Letters:

It's fun to begin work on letter writing with an exercise that helps students realize that

communicating ideas has a great deal to do with the relationship the writer has with the reader. Explain to students that when both parties share a great deal in common, the writing can be less detailed and specific than when the recipient doesn't share the same experiences and knowledge. To make this point, ask students to tell about a common



## Business Letter

### HEADING

123 Oak Street  
Boston, MA 02000  
July 7, 2003

### INSIDE ADDRESS

Customer Service  
Sunny Eyewear Company  
1357 No. Main Street  
Orlando, FL 66776

### SALUTATION

Dear Sir:

### BODY

I bought an expensive pair of your sunglasses (model XCL 2033) and have worn them for about a month. The left lens keeps falling out of the frame. The warranty stated that I could return them to you and have them repaired at no cost. I would appreciate it if you could fix my sunglasses and mail them back to me. I've enclosed a copy of the receipt and will mail them in the box they came in to protect them. Please return the box.

### CLOSING

Sincerely yours,

### SIGNATURE

*Gina Jones*  
Gina Jones

experience, such as how they got to school that day. A typical response would be:

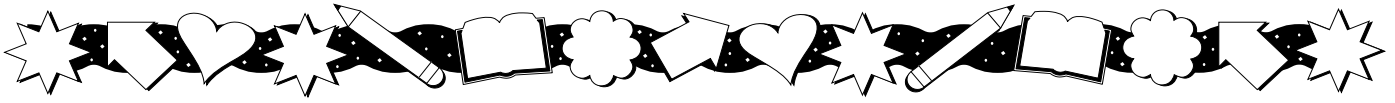
Joel and Steve: *We got a ride from Tom's mom.*

Record their answers. Make sure students notice what information is given and what information is assumed. For example, Joel and Steve assume everyone knows who Tom is, where all of them live, and maybe even what type of car or truck Tom's mom drives.

Segue from this exercise to the model **friendly letter**. Have students apply what they just learned: Gina and Sue share

common experiences and knowledge, so Gina doesn't have to explain about the fireworks at the high school, give details about which mall they'll visit, or provide information about Billy or what happened to his hamster. Gina's tone is friendly and her ideas are clear enough for Sue to understand.

Next, consider the format (see the template on page 105). Point out where lines are skipped and commas are used. A colleague of ours glues elbow macaroni on the chart to represent commas—having this 3-D reminder can be helpful and fun. Finally, explain that we capitalize only the first word in the closing.



**Business Letters:**

On another day, take a close look at Gina’s business letter. Now Gina is writing to someone she has never met, who lives far away, and who has not experienced what Gina has experienced. To convey her message, Gina must clearly explain the purpose for her letter (to have her sunglasses repaired), include specific details (model number, warranty information, a copy of the receipt, and what she wants the recipient to do), and express her ideas in a logical order (purpose for the letter, rationale for returning the glasses, her expectations). Next, consider the format (see the template for a business letter, page 106). Point out where lines are skipped and where punctuation is used.

**Comparing and Contrasting Friendly and Business Letters:**

Display a friendly letter and a business letter on chart paper. With different colored markers, highlight differences in the parts of each letter, the number of lines skipped between parts of each letter, and the punctuation.

**Literature Sources for Other Models**

Hesse, K. (1992). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Stewart, S. (1997). *The gardener*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (picture book)

Teague, M. (2002). *Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from obedience school*. New York: Scholastic. (picture book)

Name Dawn Date April 19

**Friendly Letter (to a Close Friend)**

To whom are you writing your letter?  
My friend, Kerry

Why are you writing this letter?  
Kerry moved last year to New York

What ideas will you include?

- Went to movies last night. Sasha spilled her popcorn on me!
- Sasha, Barbie, Justine + me did our nails—put stars on them.
- Bob’s Book Barn is closed!—no more book club meetings there.
- I wish you still lived here!

Use the template on page 102

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**Introductory**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Friendly Letter (to an Acquaintance)**

An acquaintance is someone you know but not as well as a close friend. Include enough detail about events, locations, and people involved so the person who receives your letter will fully understand what you are trying to say.

Who will receive your letter?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why are you writing this letter?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ideas to Include	Specific Details
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Use the template on page 103

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**Intermediate**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Business Letter (to an Unknown Reader)**

Remember to include details and explain your thoughts fully and logically so that the recipient can understand your message.

Who will receive your letter?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why are you writing this letter?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm possible ideas to include in this letter:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Choose three ideas and set them in order: List details you’ll include to help your reader understand your message.

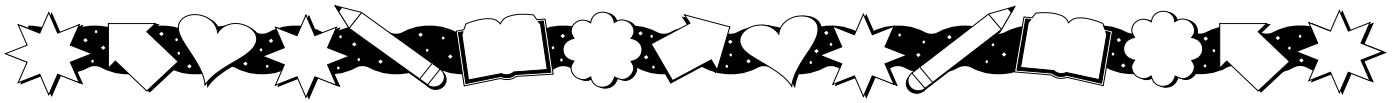
- \_\_\_\_\_ →
- \_\_\_\_\_ →
- \_\_\_\_\_ →

Closing (How will you wrap up your request or comment?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

On a separate piece of paper, write a draft of your business letter. Use the template on page 106. Be sure to include the six parts of the business letter and use correct punctuation.

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**Challenging**



## **Teacher to Teacher**

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It is developmentally appropriate to have less accomplished writers create letters for people they already know. Through the process, they learn that writing is a form of communication. Gradually, however, it is important for students to learn how to write to people who do not share common experiences. As they progress through school and beyond, more of their writing will be to people beyond their immediate proximity.

## **Using the Tiered Organizers**

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As you work with students on format, also look to see which ones understand the requirements of communicating with someone who is separated by location, time, knowledge, and experiences. Ask these students to share their letters and explain what they did to ensure that their messages would be clearly understood.

### *Introductory:* **A Friendly Letter (to a Close Friend)**

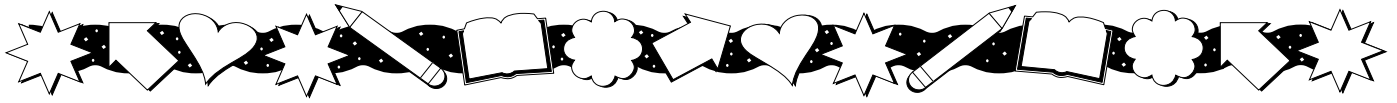
Students record whom the letter is for, the purpose of the letter, and ideas to include in the letter. They write a friendly letter, using the template on page 105 as a guide.

### *Intermediate:* **A Friendly Letter (to an Acquaintance)**

Students record whom the letter is for, the purpose of the letter, and ideas to include in the letter. Because they are writing for a less familiar reader, students specify explicit details to help bridge the gap in time, location, knowledge, and experiences between writer and reader. They write a friendly letter, using the template on page 105 as a guide.

### *Challenging:* **A Business Letter (to an Unknown Reader)**

Students determine an appropriate audience (person or business) and purpose for a letter, such as to request information or assistance, express satisfaction or dissatisfaction about a product, let a political leader know what they think about important issues. Using the template on page 106 as a guide, they draft a business letter that includes relevant details and a closing.



# Format for a Friendly Letter

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heading

**Skip 2 lines**

Salutation \_\_\_\_\_ ( , )

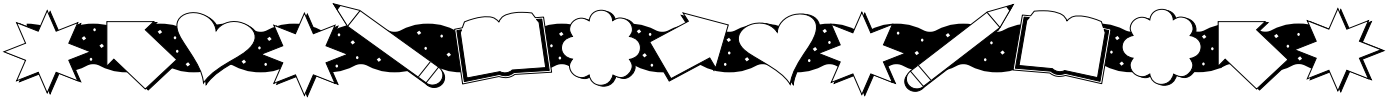
**Skip 1 line**

Body

**Skip 2 lines**

Closing \_\_\_\_\_ ( , )

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



# Format for a Business Letter



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heading

**Skip 4 lines**

Inside \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Skip 2 lines**

Salutation \_\_\_\_\_ :

**Skip 2 lines**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Body \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Skip 2 lines**

Closing \_\_\_\_\_ ,

**Skip 4 lines**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_