

## Writing an Apology Letter

### What You Need to Know

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Each of us has, at one time or another, said or done something that we wish we hadn't said or done. Rather than dwell on the mistake, however, we should take quick action to remedy the problem and then get on with life. An effective letter of apology is an important part of that process and can help turn "lemons into lemonade" and actually *improve* a relationship. This short article will give you several reasons for writing an apology letter and offer a few important suggestions to help you write a good one.

**TIMING.** Write the apology letter as soon as possible.

**ACTIONS.** Rather than focusing on the damage you have caused, write about things you will do to rectify the situation.

**BRIEF.** Keep your apology letter short and to the point.

**SINCERITY.** No one wants to read overly dramatic language. Choose your words carefully and express yourself clearly and simply.

**tone.** Your apology letter should be considerate and respectful. Remember, you are trying to rebuild a damaged relationship.

**BLAME.** Take full responsibility for what you have done.

**FOLLOW UP.** Try to set up a time when you can apologize in person, then back up your apology with considerate behavior in the future.

## **Some of the things you may need to write a letter of Apology for are:**

### **For a missed deadline**

Apologize for a missed deadline as soon as possible after the incident. The tone of your letter should be considerate and respectful because you have probably caused some inconvenience. The letter should focus on actions you will take to make up for the missed deadline. A sincere, well-worded apology followed by positive action can do much to undo any damage to your reputation. Rebuild your reputation by consistently making your deadlines in the future.

### **For betrayed trust**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. Don't apologize unless you plan to take full responsibility. Focus your comments on the actions you are taking to rectify the situation, not on the damage done. A sincere, well-worded apology, coupled with action, can go a long way toward repairing the damaged relationship. In this situation, it is usually best to apologize with a handwritten note or face to face.

### **For hurt feelings**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. Assume your reader has good reason for being offended. Express your regret with deep sincerity. In this situation, it is usually best to apologize with a handwritten note or face to face.

### **For missing a meeting or an appointment**

Whether you have already missed an appointment or will miss an appointment in the future, an explanatory note is a courtesy that will be appreciated. It shows you do take the relationship seriously. Be concise and polite.

### **For missing an event or for forgetting someone**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. Focus your comments on what you are doing to rectify the situation rather than on any damage you may have caused. A sincere, well-worded apology can go a long way toward patching up a damaged relationship. Back up your apology with considerate behavior in the future.

### **For being late to a meeting or appointment**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. Don't apologize unless you plan to take full responsibility and don't blame anyone. Rebuild your reputation by being consistently on time in the future.

### **For offensive behavior**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. This apology is best expressed with a handwritten note. Back up your apology with considerate behavior in the future.

### **Personal apology**

Write this apology as soon as possible after the incident. Focus on actions you are taking to rectify the situation, rather than on any damage you may have caused. A sincere, well-worded apology can go a long way toward patching up a damaged relationship. Back up your apology with considerate behavior in the future.

## Instructions:

- Type this apology letter on your computer using a serif font, such as Times Roman or Georgia, and print it on good-quality, bright-white paper.
- Use a formal [business letter format](#) such as full block or semi-block.
- Express your apology in the beginning of your letter: "I am so sorry..." or "I want to apologize..."
- State exactly what you did wrong early in the apology letter: "I shouldn't have lost my temper when..." or "I have looked all over, but I'm afraid I have lost your book..."
- Accept responsibility for what you did and don't blame the other person: "I accept full responsibility for what happened..." or "I know this was completely my fault..."
- Promise in your apology letter not to repeat your offensive action and ask the injured party to give you an opportunity to prove this to them.

Example:

**1. Return address of the letter writer.**

1600 Main Street  
Springfield, Kansas 12345

**2. The date of the letter.**

This is usually typed in one of two ways:

(Begin with the day, no comma) 15 January 2008 or (Begin with the month; use a comma) December 1, 2008

**3. Complete name, title, and address of the recipient.**

Use "Mr." for a male recipient. If you do not know how a female recipient prefers to be addressed (Miss, Ms., or Mrs.), it is best to use "Ms."

Ms. Anna Brown, Chair  
Department of Linguistics  
Right State University  
1415 University Drive  
Felicity, OH 45434

**4. Salutation with a colon.**

Dear Ms. Brown:

**5. Body of the letter.**

It is best to keep an initial business letter short. Business people are busy and do not have time to read long letters! In a one-page letter, you will usually only need three or four paragraphs, single spaced. Use a double space in between paragraphs. See examples that follow.

The easiest way to write the body of the [business letter](#) is to use a prewritten [business letter](#).

**6. Closing.**

The most common closing is "Sincerely." Follow this with a comma. Skip four single lines after the closing and type your name. Sign your name in the space above your name.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Wilson