

Letters: Types, Language and Style

- Letter writing is a correspondence or message between two parties.
- There are three types of letters;
 - i. formal or official letter;
 - ii. informal or friendly letter;
 - iii. semi-formal letter.
- The three types are meant to communicate.
- Each has its unique formats or formal features what could generally be referred to as conventions.
- The distinguish features of each letter determine their uniqueness.

Formal or Official Letter

- The correspondence between a superior and a subordinate in an establishment or any correspondence done in an official setting for official purpose(s).

Formal features include:

- The writer's address
- The date
- The recipient's address
- Salutation
- The title or heading of the letter
- The body of the letter
- Complimentary close/subscription and name

The writer's address and Date (Formal Letter)

Department of English,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Ilorin,
Ilorin,
Kwara State.

12th November 2018.

➤ 12th Nov., 2018.; 12/11/2018; 12-11-2018 **Not Acceptable**

The Recipient's Address

The Vice Chancellor,
University of Ilorin.

Through:

The Dean,
Faculty of Arts.

Through:

The Head of Department,
Department of English.

Salutation and The Title or Heading

- Dear Sir,
- Sir,
- Dear Madam,

The Title or Heading

either

**APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION INTO THE PRE-DEGREE
PROGRAMME IN ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING**

or

**Application for Admission into the Pre-degree Programme in
Electrical Engineering**

The Body of the Letter

- In letter-writing generally, this is where the writer will express his or her mind freely.
- This aspect has three structural components.
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. The middle
 - iii. The conclusion
- A good body of any letter contains three elements:
 - a. Paragraphing
 - b. Content and
 - c. Grammatical coherence.

Complimentary Close/Subscription and Name

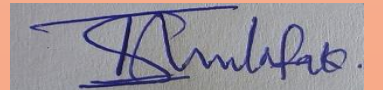
- This formal feature of a formal letter is located at the bottom right hand corner of the paper.
- The acceptable complimentary close or subscription is

“Yours faithfully”

with its “Y” in the upper case and “f” in lower case.

- This subscription is followed by a comma and the writer’s name.

Yours faithfully,

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read 'Ishola Farooq', is shown on a light blue rectangular background.

ISHOLA, Farooq

Informal/Friendly Letter and its Features

- It is a friendly letter because it does not carry any element of formality.
- It uses much familiarity in its presentation.
- Its features are:
 - The Writer's Address
 - The Date
 - Salutation (Casual Name)
 - The Body
 - Complimentary close or subscription and name

Informal Letter continues...

- Apart from the recipient's address and title, all other features of formal letters are imbedded in an informal letter.
- Salutation in an informal letter is multiple because of familiarity between the writer and recipient.
- The salutation is expected to address the name of the recipient rather than any other title. e.g. Dear John and **Not dear Friend**
- In the body of the letter, short form of expressions are acceptable such as don't, won't, isn't and so on.
- In an informal letter, the acceptable complimentary close or subscription and name are Yours sincerely, Yours affectionately among others.

Semi-formal Letter and its Features

- Semi-formal letters are sent to people that are not well known.
- They are more polite than informal letter and are written in a neutral style, not too formal nor too informal.
- This letter has dual nationality. It has a few features of both formal and informal letters.
- Other than this duality, it also has the writer's address; the date; recipient's address; body and complimentary close or subscription and name.
- It has the same format and structure with both formal and informal letters.

Examples of formal letter

- Write a letter to your Head of Department explaining why you missed a continuous assessment test and requesting for a make-up.
- Your school has been performing poorly in public examinations for the past three years. Write a letter to your principal suggesting ways of making students more interested in academic work.
- The sanitary condition of your community is appalling and there are fears of an outbreak of communicable diseases. Write a letter to the chairman of your local government area, drawing his attention to the problem and suggesting ways of dealing with it.

Examples of Informal Letter

- You have spent about six weeks in your new school. Write a letter to your father telling him about your experiences so far.
- You have learnt that your younger brother intends to involve himself in examination malpractice during the WASSCE. Write a letter to him warning him of the dangers of such an action and urging him to concentrate on his studies.
- You have gained admission to a famous university. Write a letter to your wealthy uncle giving, at least, three reasons which can convince him to sponsor you.

Examples of Semi-formal Letter

- On your way back home from a journey, you had an accident and you were taken to a private hospital where you were adequately taken care of. Write a letter of appreciation to the Medical Director of the hospital.
- You are experiencing problems with your colleague at work and you want to ask you boss for some advice, write a letter to your boss asking him on how to handle your colleague in your place of work.