Creating a Professional Office Letter

2012

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide step by step instructions to aide in the creation of a professional office letter.

OVERVIEW:

Office letters are a form of communication used to deliver information to those outside of your organization. Office letters should be written in a formal format. All letters should be courteous and professional; they are a reflection of the business and the author.

There are two common formats appropriate for an office letter, Full Block Style and Modified block style.

Full block style is aligning the entire letter to the left margin.

Modified block style begins with a center alignment of the return address, date and complementary closing. The rest of the letter is aligned to the left.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. **Decide your format and set your margins.**
   You want your letters to have a neat and clean appearance. You can create a frame of white space around your letter using margins. 1 ½ to 2 inch margins are usually a good place to start. The left margin should be the same size as the right. The space at the top of the page should be approximately the same amount as the bottom.
   Check the proportions of the letter, by using print preview.

2. **Headings**.
   The full return address and date should be placed in the heading. The heading should be placed two inches from the top of the page.
   You do not need to place your name here; it will be at the end of the letter.
   Spell out street, avenue, first do not shorten them.
   If you are going to abbreviate the state make sure you use the standard postal service abbreviations.
   The date goes under the return address.
   If using letterhead only place the date three lines below the last line of the letter head.

3. **Inside address**.
   The inside address is the recipients full name, title and address.
   This is to be placed two to six lines below the date and is to be aligned to the left. The amount depends on the length of the letter, so use your judgment on whichever is most aesthetically pleasing.

4. **Salutation or Greeting.**
   The salutation should be placed on the left margin, two lines below the inside address. In most business situations you want to use the personal title such as Mrs., Mr., in some cases you will use the professional title such as (professor or senator).

   If you are addressing your letter to a company to which you do not know the name of the intended recipient's name, address the letter to the appropriate department.

5. **Body.**
   Align the body of the letter to the left, two lines below the salutation, or anything that is before the body of the letter. Single space within the paragraph and double-space between the paragraphs.

6. **Complementary Closing.**
   The complementary closing should be two spaces below the body of letter. Use standard closing such as Sincerely, Sincerely yours or Yours truly. If it is someone you are familiar with use closings such as best wishes or best regards.

7. **Signature Block.**
   Type your full name about four lines below the body. Align this with your complementary closing. You can add your title to the next line if necessary. The following lines can include contact information.

8. **Sign the letter** in the space above your typed name.

9. **End notations.**
   End notations are used for any additional information. The information should be placed on the left margin, two spaces below the signature information.
   Include any information sent along with the letter or any other pertinent information.

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Tips

- Always check spelling and grammar.
- Proof read your email a few times, just to make sure it has good flow.
- If you are unsure about your letter, have someone else proof read it.
- Always be professional.
- Never write anything you would not want your boss to read