

Student Lesson Plan: How to Write a Formal Letter: Unit 1, Lesson 1

Learning Objective: Today you will learn about how to lay out a formal letter and what kind of language to use.

Layout means where we put things on the page.

Success Criteria: By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand when formal letters are used.
- Recognise the correct position of the date, name and address of the writer and recipient and the signature of the writer in a formal letter.
- Identify key words and phrases used in a formal letter.
- Recognise synonyms (other words that have a similar meaning) for 'damaged' and 'broken.'

Learning Steps:

Task 1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Do you know what a formal letter is?
- When would you write a formal letter?

A formal letter is a type of letter that we write to people we don't know well or in a professional setting. It's different from the letters or messages we write to our friends and family because it follows certain rules and conventions.

In the next five lessons we are going to write a letter of complaint which is a type of formal letter. Other types of formal letters may include letters to a politician, to a headteacher, appointment letters and legal letters, for example.

Think and talk about these questions!

- Have you ever bought something that was damaged or faulty and wanted to make a complaint?
- Perhaps you've had a bad experience in a café or restaurant where the waiter or waitress was rude to you, or the food was disgusting?
- Or maybe you were really excited about a day trip to a theme park or a fair but it was ruined because half the rides were out of action or the queues were so long you only got to go on three rides?
- What went wrong? What did you expect and how did the item you bought or the experience you had not live up to expectations? How did you feel? How could the situation be resolved? Who would you complain to?

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Task 2. (15 minutes)

Look at the **Image of a Damaged Trainer** or use Scribeasy.com to find your own picture. Discuss what is wrong with the picture. How are the trainers damaged? Use the **Word Bank: Words for 'Broken' & 'Damaged'** to help you describe what you see in the picture.

- Look at **Letter of Complaint No.1**. This is a letter of complaint written by a person who bought a pair of faulty trainers. Read this with an adult or with your group. Notice the layout of the letter (where things are on the page). Can you spot these things?

| | |
|---|--|
| Sender's Address: This is usually positioned on the top right corner of the letter. It includes the sender's street, city, and postcode. | Date: Just below the sender's address, we write the date (e.g., 15th April 2026). |
| Recipient's Address: This is positioned on the left side, starting on the line below the date. It includes the recipient's name, street, city, and postcode. | Salutation: This is how we greet the recipient. If we know their name, we use 'Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms [Surname],' and if we don't, we use 'Dear Sir/Madam.' |
| Body of the Letter: This is where we write our message. It's usually divided into paragraphs. | Closing Sentence: This is the last line of the letter. It often says something like 'I look forward to hearing from you soon.' |
| Sign-off Phrase: This is how we end the letter. If we started with 'Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms [Surname],' we end with 'Yours sincerely,' and if we started with 'Dear Sir/Madam,' we end with 'Yours faithfully.' | Sender's Name & Title (Mr, Mrs, Ms, etc.): This is where we print our name and what we want people to call us. It's positioned below the closing. |
| Signature: this is where the writer hand writes their name. It goes above the typed name and title of the writer. | Fun! When you write your own letter you could pretend to be a Lady or a Lord, a King, or a Queen or even a Princess if you want to! Who would you like to be? |

This layout is the same in all formal letters.

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Task 3. (10 minutes)

- Look at **Labels: Elements of a Formal Letter**. Now cut out the words and phrases and glue the labels on your **Letter of Complaint No.1** in the correct position.

Task 4. (20 minutes)

Now we are going to look at what type of language is used in a formal letter. Formal letters use formal language. This means no slang or abbreviations, and sentences should be complete and well-structured. The tone should be polite and respectful.

- Look at **Letter of Complaint No.2**. This is a different letter of complaint but follows the same layout and has the same purpose.
- Read this with an adult or in your group. Can you spot the formal language features in this letter?
- Who is the audience for the letter?
- What is the complaint about?
- Which words tell you how the writer is feeling?
- What is the writer asking for?

- Read the **Word Bank: Language for a Formal Letter**. Talk about the meaning of the words and phrases in the word bank. Are there any words you don't know or understand?

- Now take a highlighter or pen and highlight or underline any formal vocabulary in the letter. Some of the words and phrases are in the word bank. Can you find other examples of formal words and phrases that are not included in the word bank and highlight them too?

Task 5. Review & Reflect (5 minutes)

Time to check what you have learnt today!

Now answer as many **Review & Reflect Questions** (below) as you can to check your understanding of the layout and language features of a formal letter. Make sure to ask if you don't know or don't understand. Intelligent people ask questions!

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Review & Reflect Questions

| Layout Questions | Language Questions |
|--|--|
| Where does the recipient's address go on a formal letter? | What does 'recipient' mean? |
| Does the writer's name go before or after their signature? | What is the difference between formal and informal language? |
| When would you use Dear Sir/Madam? | When might we need to use formal language? |
| When would you use 'Yours faithfully'? | What does 'require' mean? |
| When would you use 'Yours sincerely'? | What does 'consequently' mean? |
| Where does the date go? | What is the difference between 'expecting' something and 'hoping' for something? |
| Where would you write your address? | What is a 'signature'? |
| What would you write in the opening paragraph? | If you are 'frustrated,' how are you feeling? |
| What's the difference between a formal and an informal letter? | What is a 'title'? Does <i>everyone</i> have a title? |