
Introduction

Writing is, in fact, documenting one's thinking. When we write, we put down what we think. It's just like speaking, but done more leisurely. We can take our time. We may first choose a topic, then narrow it down to suit our choice and potential. We can look for and find whatever sources and references necessary to prop up, enrich, and authenticate our premises. Once we gather the required data, we may set out for preparing some molds into which we put the data piece by piece. The molds – also known as the blueprints, or more technically speaking, the outlines – are in fact the means of systematically putting our ideas across.

However, even with such already prepared blueprints and data at hand, it often happens that while fleshing the skeleton, we may have to check ourselves for extravagancies, rummage our short and long memories for something nobler, or even adjust some bones here and there. We would have to scribble pages and pages, tear them up again and again, till we can come up with something neat and tidy, right to our point, and satisfactory to our taste.

All such stages and processes, that is, planning for a topic, picking up some data, and concocting the blueprint are just there to help us channel organically whatever has come to our minds. And the different manipulations we do, i.e. jotting down some notes, preparing the first drafts, reading, editing, revising, and refining our later and later copies, will lead us to a quality piece of writing that naturally shouldn't be subject to any criticism. But that is not so.

In each and every corner and turn of this maze, we almost always find cases where there are abysmal gaps between what we think and what we write. Unless we are capable enough to close up such gaps we will be, no doubt, lost in the middle of the way. We will be at loss because our writing won't make any sense, let alone the sense we wanted it to make. And mind you, this is true of all types of writings: technical, literary, journalistic, etc. Letter writing is, hence, no exception. But how can we be capable enough, competent enough, to bridge our minds over to our pens?

Well, that's not an easy task. Of course, there are the technicalities of writing to help us: grammar, diction, punctuation, unity, capitalization, spelling, coherence, so on and so forth. We can also grow in ourselves an appreciation of the beauty of language

in order to make our writing beautiful. Then again, these are not the only writing issues to master. They can help only when the intended meaning or message is accurately outlined and explicitly drawn up. What we need is to have a touch of deep understanding and a taste of effective communicating. These can be achieved, undoubtedly, through one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.

Thus, one should write and practice writing in whatever language he/she desires, native or else. Furthermore, one should always check his/her mastery of the language he/she is writing in and try to enrich such mastery through studying and appreciating not only the technicalities of the language proper but also its very beauty.

S. H. Jalali Chimeh (1997)

To the Reader

The present book is intended mainly for English undergraduate students who take up either translation, literature, or teacher training as their majors. It is also meant for other individuals who, for one reason or another, are interested in or in need of writing this or that type of letter. The nature of the book, however, is that of a textbook which, hopefully, can be read alone, or taught and learned in class.

The book is designed in three chapters; namely, Personal Letters (Ordinary and Formal), Social Letters, and Business Letters. While more attention is given to social letters, most attention is paid to business letters. The reason is that it is these two types of letters, especially the third type, that would come handy in future life of the student out of the campus. For instance, when it comes to an application letter by a newly graduated student for further studies in so and so university, or an inquiry for some goods by the sales manager of a company, the importance of such letters doubles and probably triples. For any mistake in preparing such letters could suggest either bad impression or financial loss. Hence, more and most emphasis is given to social and business letters. The sample letters, mostly the business sample letters, are also prepared by the author himself for at least three reasons:

1. To delineate what the author means by style of each specific type of letter.

2. To tap the author's 10 years of experience in preparing and writing business letters, letters of memorandum, basic ordering agreements, contracts, letters of credit; and also the formats for performance bond guaranties, advance payment guaranties, warranties, etc.

3. To respond to the expectations of those graduate students who, attending the author's many letter writing classes, were always restless to know more about letters than those mundane, clichéd and stereotyped wordings of old use.

Names of legal and/or real entities throughout the letters the author has written, especially the business ones, are all imaginary. No similarity is intended and no reference should be inferred.

Throughout the three chapters, specifically at the end of each chapter, there are some exercises, which if attended to carefully and patiently, may yield some good results. Some most commonly used abbreviations and an index are included in the book. Also included, though may not be specifically located, is the author's hope that the book can, to some extent, be of some help to all those interested!

S. H. Jalali Chimeh (1997)

Some Premises on Classifying Letters

Among different writing variables, there are two very important variables which determine the language and the form of writing. The first is the type of addressing. Who is addressing who? There are different types of addressing. For example, a writer addresses the readership as in literary writings where the author (the novelist, playwright, poet, etc) addresses his/her readers in general. As for letter writing, there are three types of addressing:

1. A real person (entity) addresses another real person (entity); e.g.:
 - a friend writes to his/her peer;
 - a classmate, roommate, inmate, etc writes to his/her mate;
 - a brother, sister, mother, etc writes to his/her counterpart;
 - etc. (Also, when there is an answer-back.)
2. A real person addresses a legal one (entity); e.g.:
 - a student writes to a university;

- a customer writes to a company;
 - an applicant writes to an organization;
 - etc. (Also, when the legal entity answers back.)
3. A legal person (entity) addresses another legal person; e.g.:
- a company writes to another company;
 - an institute writes to another institute;
 - a ministry addresses another one;
 - etc. (Also, when there is an answer-back.)

The second variable is the objective of writing. Why someone writes to someone else? What ends is he/she trying to reach? What is the relationship between the writer and the addressee? For example, a journalist writes to earn money, whereas a novelist writes for artistic satisfaction, or even fame. The relationship between a journalist and his/her readers is specific, intimate and time-bound, whereas that of a novelist is general, remote and time-free.

As regards letter writing, we may suggest three different objectives:

1. Writing for mere communication (getting in touch) with one's friend, relative, peer, etc and consolidating such friendship, relationship, etc. The relationship between the addressor and the addressee is close. (Here, we are talking about personal letters.)

2. Writing for some cultural, social, economic, or other such objective; e.g. applying for further studies, recommending someone, buying something, etc. The relationship between the addressor and the addressee is remote and formal. (Here, we are talking about social letters.)

3. Writing solely for business or administrative purposes, where a buyer company enquires for some goods/services and a seller company responds. The relationship between the two companies is detached, impersonal and official. (Here, we are talking about business letters.)

I believe that these two premises are the essential bases for dividing letters into three types: personal, social and business. Such division, in turn, will reveal two important differences among such letters, namely differences in style and layout.

1. Style-wise, personal letters are often informal, at times colloquial, and, to some extent, lax in nature. Lax style is evident in:

- Choice of words, e.g.:
 - cosy (friendly),
 - pal (companion),
 - line (telephone call),
 - cop (policeman),
 - goof (make a mistake),

- etc;
- Use of grammatical structures, e.g.:
- Hey, enjoy yourself!
- Drop a line if you can!
- Have any idea how to get away with it?
- etc.

Here is an example of personal letter:

Dear Cindy,

Here are the earth science notes you asked me to send. I hope you can read them.

Hope you're enjoying your vacation. Too bad it has to be in a hospital though, and so far away.

A lot of these notes are missing. Mr. Preising has got me all confused. I don't know what to take down half the time. But you said you wanted them, so here they are. I'll send better ones next time.

Oh. Almost forgot. Tommy Chin drew a few crazy sketches about that continental drift/stuff. Mr. Preising didn't like him dumping on his pet theory like that at first but he finally gave in and let us hang them on the side board. I'm sending them for you to see.

Take care of yourself.

See ya,

Meg

(Jackson & Evans, p. 423)