



ENGL 1033

Assignment 1: Business Correspondence

This assignment consists of two parts: (1) a business letter and (2) a memo. Your business letter will be an inquiry letter, a claim letter, or a suggestion letter to the chair of your department about its freshman orientation program. The memo will explain the choices you made while writing the letter.

An **inquiry letter** asks for information from the recipient. A **claim letter** explains a problem and asks for amends. A **suggestion letter**, as the name implies, offers the recipient a potential way (or ways) to improve his or her organization.

Business Letter:

First, research your department to identify its chair, who will be the recipient of your letter. Also, identify the department's mailing address. To properly format your letter, follow the instructions in [Formatting the Business Letter](#). Determine whether the recipient holds a Ph.D. or medical degree; if so, refer to the individual as "Dr." in the salutation. Otherwise, use "Mr." or "Ms."; do not use "Mrs." Do not use "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam" as your salutation; your letter must be addressed to a specific individual.

Regardless of the type of letter you write, your first paragraph should clearly and concisely explain who you are and the purpose of your letter. Throughout your letter, you should maintain a formal, professional tone. Do not use the imperative mood (commands), and do not use clichés like "beat around the bush."

Inquiry Letter:

Remember the following if you write an inquiry letter:

- Use simple sentences, and put sentences in the form of a question (for example, don't write: *I was wondering how much your product costs*. Instead, write: *How much does your product cost?*).
- Present your questions in a bulleted or numbered list; do not present more than five questions.
- Thank the recipient for his or her time and consideration. Do not thank the recipient "in advance."
- Provide your contact information so the recipient can respond to you. If applicable, provide the recipient with a deadline; however, do not rush the recipient.

Claim Letter:

Remember the following if you write a claim letter:

- Clearly articulate the problem, using specific factual information.
- Maintain a formal and professional tone throughout your letter, even if the problem has caused you great distress. Do not let emotion get in the way of rationality.
- Explain what steps, if any, you have already taken to resolve the problem.
- Explain specifically how the problem has inconvenienced you.
- State specifically what you want the recipient to do to solve the problem. Be realistic with your expectation, and do not threaten the recipient.
- Thank the recipient for his or her time and consideration, and provide your contact information.



Suggestion Letter:

Remember the following if you write a suggestion letter:

- Explain how your suggestion(s) will benefit the recipient and his or her organization.
- Be specific with your suggestion(s), explaining not only what they are but how they will work.
- Do not overload the recipient with suggestions; present no more than three.
- Conclude with your contact information, and invite the recipient to discuss your ideas further.

Memo:

Your memo should explain to your instructor the choices you made while writing your business letter.

The memo does not simply repeat the same information presented in the letter. To format your memo, follow the instructions in [Memo](#). The recipient of your memo (the “To” line) is your instructor.

The “Discussion” portion of your memo will explain, in detail, the various rhetorical choices you made while writing your letter. In the first half of the Discussion, provide the reader with background information, facts the reader will need to know for understanding, including:

- the name of your letter’s recipient
- what position that person holds and to which department they belong
- how you found this information (your research methods)
- why you wrote the type of letter you did
- why your letter is important

Essentially, in this first section of the Discussion, you explain everything you did *before* writing the letter.

In the second half of the Discussion, called the “Conclusion,” you explain everything you did *as* you wrote the letter. Explain your reasoning for the following:

- why you used the tone you did (cite examples from your letter)
- why you organized your letter the way you did
- why you included the content you did
- how your audience affected the way you wrote the letter

Note: The “Recommendation” section that concludes the memo indicates to the reader (your instructor) what action you want them to take next (such as meeting during office hours to discuss your grade on the assignment, corresponding via email, etc.). If you wrote a claim letter or a suggestion letter, this recommendation is NOT the same as the recommendation you made in your letter. Remember that the two documents have entirely different audiences.