

Block-Style Business Letter Types

Unit: Technology

Problem Area: Format Business Documents

Lesson: Block-Style Business Letter Types

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Identify essential elements of a business letter.**
- 2 Explain block-style business letter formatting.**
- 2 Explain modified block-style and simplified block-style business letter formatting.**

- **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

E-unit(s) corresponding to this lesson plan. CAERT, Inc. <http://www.mycaert.com>.

“Creating a Block Style Business Letter,” *Saylor Academy, YouTube*. Accessed December 17, 2019. <https://youtu.be/y-mHLCBXEQ>

“Sample Letters,” *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Accessed December 17, 2019. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/basic_business_letters/sample_letters.html

Kelly, Mary Lou, “Letter Styles: Block and Variation,” *YouTube*. Accessed December 17, 2019. <https://youtu.be/W88WFrPebWA>



■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials
- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying masters
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other designated items for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ block-style letter
- ▶ body
- ▶ closing elements
- ▶ elements
- ▶ margin
- ▶ modified block-style letters
- ▶ opening elements
- ▶ salutation
- ▶ simplified block-style letters
- ▶ signature area

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Have students type a letter to a department store or restaurant, thanking the business for good customer service or filing a complaint regarding poor customer service. Have the students look up the address of the store to use on the letter. Have students create a fictitious store manager name. Do not coach the students on formatting or what elements to include in the letter; but rather encourage them to compose and arrange the letter however they think is best. The formatting and business letter elements they use in this interest approach will be used as a “fix-it” in the lab to apply what they have learned about formatting a business letter using the three styles in this lesson. Have them print and save the initial letter they write in this interest inventory. They will need to use the letter again for the lab.

CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Identify essential elements of a business letter.

Anticipated Problem: What are essential elements of a business letter?

- I. As students move from high school into college and then into the workforce, there are certain basic skills they need to assure their success. One such skill is understanding how to format formal business letters. For example, they may write a college application letter or a cover letter when applying for a job. Hence, it is important to learn the basic formatting rules for writing professional business letters. Business professionals find these letter styles easy to read and it saves them from wasting time or being confused with other varieties of formatting.
 - A. As students may have read about in another lesson in this library, there are essential elements that act as the building blocks for writing a business letter.
 1. **Elements** refer to the different parts or sections of a business letter.
 2. Standard business letters contain the following elements: sender's address, date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, sender's typed and handwritten signatures, sender's job title, typist initials, enclosure notation, and indication of copies sent to others.
 - B. **Opening elements** refer to information contained in the upper part of the letter, before the body of the letter. Opening elements consist of sender's address, date, inside address, and salutation.
 1. The sender's address contains street address, city, state, and zip code.
 2. The date reflects when the letter was written. Write out the month, day, and year.
 3. Inside address is another way of saying the recipient's address. It contains the courtesy title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr.), first and last name, and job title of the person to whom the letter is written. The information also includes company name, street address, city, state, and zip code.
 4. The **salutation** is the opening greeting line of the letter.
 - C. The **body** is the part of the letter that articulates the substantive content of the letter.
 1. The first paragraph tells the reader the reason for the letter.
 2. The next paragraph provides detailed information that includes background information and the bottom line message or purpose or desired actions or outcome.

- D. **Closing elements** refer to additional details and authentication practices that tie up the communication with professional closure.
1. The first closing element is called the complimentary close. The complimentary close includes a respectful phrase such as “sincerely” or “respectfully yours”.
 2. Under the complimentary close is the signature area. The **signature area** is the place on the letter where the author signs his or her name to add authenticity and credibility to the letter.
 3. Under the signature area is the typed name of sender and job title.
 4. The typist’s initials can be placed under the sender’s name.
 5. An attachment/enclosure notation can be included at the bottom of the letter if there are accompanying materials.
 6. If the letter was sent to other people, then “cc:” with the names of those copied on the letter can also be listed at the bottom of the letter.

Teaching Strategy: Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM–A to project key information from this learning objective. Have students compare the letter they wrote in the interest activity to see which of the elements they included or excluded.

Objective 2: Explain block-style business letter formatting.

Anticipated Problem: What is block-style business letter formatting?

- II. A **block-style letter** is a type of letter that feature all of the business letter elements presented in this lesson along with distinct left margin alignment. Block-style formatting includes the following formatting rules: left margin alignment; top, bottom, left-, and right-side margin settings; and line spacing.
- A. Left margin alignment. Elements of a block-style letter are aligned on the left margin.
1. All of the opening, body, and closing elements start at the same place on the left margin.
 2. When looking at a block-style letter, the information is perfectly aligned straight down the left margin and there are no indents. It forms a perfect visual line down the left margin of the page; hence it looks like the side of a block.
- B. Top, Bottom, Left-, and Right-Side Margin Settings: **Margin** refers to how far the text begins in relation to the edges of the page.
1. The top margin setting is 2 inches.
 2. The bottom margin setting is 1 inch.
 3. Both left- and right-side margins are also set at 1 inch.

- C. Line Spacing: In the body of the letter, use single space with no additional spacing before or after paragraphs. Besides single spacing the body, there are other special spacing rules.
1. First, after the sender's address in the opening, use a double space (hit "enter" key twice) before writing the date.
 2. After the date, use a quadruple space (hit "enter" key four times) before writing the inside address. (Note: you may see examples where there is only a double space after the date. You may find some variation in conventions in spacing, depending on how long the letter is. Either way, the information must be spaced greater than single space in order to give some visual separation of the information. Do not worry too much about small differences such as whether to double or quadruple-space. Choose the one that gives the best visual separation of the information.)
 3. Double space between inside address and salutation.
 4. Double space between salutation and body.
 5. Double space between paragraphs in the body.
 6. Double space after complimentary closing.
 7. Quadruple space after complimentary closing—this creates the space for the signature.
 8. Double space after the written sender name under the signature.
 9. Double space between written name and typist initials.
 10. Double space after typist initials and attachment/enclosure and "cc:" information.
- D. If the stationary (paper) is on letterhead that contains the sender's address, then that information can be left out of the opening elements. In this case, start with the date as the first opening element.

Teaching Strategy: *Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Have students visit the following web resources to view a block-style letter: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/basic_business_letters/sample_letters.html. Have students view the following video on developing a block-style letter and using Microsoft Word formatting tools in the process: <https://youtu.be/y-mHLCBXEOQ>.*

Objective 3: Explain modified block-style and simplified block-style business letter formatting.

Anticipated Problem: What are modified block-style and simplified block-style letter formatting rules?

- III. Modified and simplified block-style letters are quite similar to block-style letters. **Modified block-style letters** are letters containing all of the same elements as block-style, but changes have been made to some of the alignments and placement of information on the page.
- A. Modified Block-Style: all of the elements remain in modified block; however, elements in the opening and closing are positioned in the center.
1. The date is center formatted, or approximately 4 inches from the left margin.
 2. The complimentary closing, signature area, and sender's name in the closing are also placed at the center of the page, or approximately 4 inches from the left margin.
 3. The first line of each paragraph is indented in modified block-styled letters.
 4. The spacing requirements are the same as block style.
- B. Simplified Block-Style: **simplified block-style letter** are letters that do not contain all of the same elements as block and modified block-styles; hence it gets the name "simplified".
1. The salutation and complimentary closing are not included.
 2. The inside address is written in all capitals.
 3. A subject line is included to replace the salutation. The subject line is written in all capital letters.
 4. Under the signature area in the closing elements, the sender's name and title are typed in all capitals.
 5. All of the simplified elements are aligned to the left margin and follow the same spacing formatting as block style.

Teaching Strategy: Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-B and C to demonstrate the information from this learning objective. Have students visit the following web resource to view examples of letters: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/basic_business_letters/sample_letters.html. Have students view the following video for instruction on writing these styles of letters: <https://youtu.be/W88WFrPebWA>.

Review/Summary. Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. If a textbook is being used, questions at the ends of chapters may also be included in the Review/Summary.

- **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. b
2. j
3. f
4. c
5. g
6. d
7. a
8. h
9. i
10. e

Part Two: Multiple Choice

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. a

Part Three: True/False

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T

Block-Style Business Letter Types

► **Part One: Matching**

Instructions: Match the term with the correct definition.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. opening elements | f. elements |
| b. block-style letter | g. closing elements |
| c. simplified block-style letters | h. signature area |
| d. salutation | i. modified block-style letters |
| e. body | j. margin |

- ___ 1. a type of letter that features all of the business letter elements presented in this lesson along with distinct left margin alignment
- ___ 2. how far the text begins in relation to the edges of the page
- ___ 3. the different parts or sections of a business letter
- ___ 4. letters that do not contain all of the same elements as block and modified block-styles
- ___ 5. additional details and authentication practices that tie up the communication with professional closure
- ___ 6. the opening greeting line of the letter
- ___ 7. information contained in the upper part of the letter, before the body of the letter
- ___ 8. the place on the letter where the author signs his or her name to add authenticity and credibility to the letter
- ___ 9. letters containing all of the same elements as block-style, but change have been made to some of the alignments and placement of information on the page
- ___ 10. the part of the letter that articulates the substantive content of the letter



► Part Two: Multiple Choice

Instructions: Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Which of the following is part of the opening elements of a business letter?
 - a. sender's address
 - b. date
 - c. signature area
 - d. both a and b are correct

2. A block-style letter follows which of the following formatting rules?
 - a. double space everything
 - b. aligns to right margin
 - c. aligns to left margin
 - d. does not include salutation and complimentary closing

3. A modified block-style letter differs from block-style letter in which of the following ways?
 - a. modified uses different line spacing rules
 - b. modified uses different alignment and indentation rules
 - c. modified does not include the same letter elements
 - d. both a and c are correct

4. Which of the following elements is not included in a simplified block-style letter?
 - a. subject line
 - b. salutation
 - c. body
 - d. signature area

5. Which of the following is true when comparing simplified and modified block-style formatting?
 - a. Simplified keeps left alignment, but modified centers some elements
 - b. Both simplified and modified omit some letter elements
 - c. Both simplified and modified use a salutation
 - d. Simplified does not include a signature area, but modified does

► **Part Three: True/False**

Instructions: Write *T* for true or *F* for false.

- _____ 1. If the letter is composed on letterhead, then the sender's address can be left out of the opening elements.
- _____ 2. Modified block-style is called modified mainly because the text alignment is centered for some elements and the paragraphs are indented.
- _____ 3. Margins for a block-styled letter are as follows: 2 inches on top, bottom, and both sides.
- _____ 4. All three types of letters are formatted to align every element with the left side of the document.
- _____ 5. The salutation and complimentary closing are not included in simplified-block style letters.

ELEMENTS OF A PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS LETTER

1. sender's address
2. date
3. inside address
4. salutation
5. body
6. complimentary close
7. sender's typed and handwritten signatures
8. sender's job title
9. typist initials
10. enclosure notation
11. indication of copies sent to others



BUSINESS LETTER COMPONENTS

	Block Style	Modified Block Style	Simplified Block Style
Date	✓	✓	✓
Sender's address	*	*	*
Inside address	✓	✓	✓
Salutation	✓	✓	✗
Subject line	✗	✗	✓
Body	✓	✓	✓
Complimentary close	✓	✓	✗
Signature area	✓	✓	✓
Typist initials	✓	✓	✓
Attachment	**	**	**
cc:	**	**	**

* = if the information is contained in the letterhead information, it does not need to be included in the opening elements of the letter.

** = as needed



BUSINESS LETTER FORMATTING

	Block Style	Modified Block Style	Simplified Block Style
Top margin = 2 inches	✓	✓	✓
Bottom margin = 1 inch	✓	✓	✓
Left and right margins = 1	✓	✓	✓
All elements aligned to left	✓	X	✓
Date, complimentary closing, signature area, and sender's name are centered	X	✓	X
Paragraphs indented	X	✓	X
Single space paragraphs	✓	✓	✓
Double space all other, except quadruple space areas	✓	✓	✓
Quadruple space after date and after complimentary closing	✓	✓	✓



Formatting Business Letters

Objective

To format a business letter into block-style, modified block-style, and simplified block-style formatting.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ Internet-connected computer
- ◆ word processor
- ◆ letter you wrote to the department store or restaurant at the beginning of this lesson

Procedure

1. Open the letter you wrote to the department store or restaurant when you first started this lesson.
2. Using the elements and formatting rules of a block-style letter covered in this lesson, format your letter into a block-style letter. Save it and add “block-style” to the title of the document.
3. Using the elements and formatting rules of a modified block-style letter covered in this lesson, format your letter into a modified block-style letter. Save it and add “modified block-style” to the title of the document.
4. Using the elements and formatting rules of a simplified block-style letter covered in this lesson, format your letter into a simplified block-style letter. Save it and add “simplified block-style” to the title of the document.
5. Print the letters and staple them before submitting to teacher for feedback. If your teacher prefers, email the letters to your teacher or submit them online instead.

