

Write Letters That Sell

Whether they're sent via e-mail or snail mail, well-written letters give buyers and sellers a compelling reason to do business with you.

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Think letter-writing isn't important anymore? Think again. Whether sent via e-mail or the U.S. Postal Service, the written word is still essential to client communications. Knowing how to construct and compose a good business letter is a critical part of successful dealings with customers.

Why are letters important in the age of text messaging? A letter lasts forever. OK, maybe not forever. But it surely outlasts a Twitter message. I think of every real estate letter as resume—a part of your identity. Each letter that accompanies your name and business card tells consumers a little bit about who you are and why they should do business with you. I will first talk about hard-copy letters, and then provide some tips for e-mail correspondence.

The Elements of a Business Letter

There are some basic elements of a business letter that should generally be included with every piece of correspondence you draft:

- Date
- Your Address
- Inside Address (Recipient's Address)
- Salutation
- Body
- Closing
- Signature
- Printed Name
- Enclosure
- Reference Initials

Professional Format

While there are a few main types of business letter formats, the **full block** is the most popular today, and it's also the simplest style to implement. With the full block format, all paragraphs are single-spaced and flush left of the document. The following is an example of a full block letter which incorporates all of the essential elements.

Month, Day, Year

Recipient's Name and Address

Salutation,

Body: Single spaced, with line between paragraphs. Hi, my name is [Agent's Name], and I just sold the home at [Listing Address] in your neighborhood. Are you considering a move, or, would you just like to know the value of your property?

Either way, call me for a free price evaluation on what your house might be worth on today's real estate market. I'll be glad to provide this information for you at no cost and no obligation. I hope you'll welcome your new neighbors to the area, and please keep my business card on file if I can help you in any way.

Closing (Thank you),

Signature

Printed Name

Enclosure (omit if there's no enclosure)

Typist's initials (omit if you typed the letter yourself)

Although this letter did not incorporate the subject or enclosure lines, the major elements of the business letter are included. Make sure you check your margins and spacing before printing your letter. Most word processor programs include a "print preview" button that will show you what the letter will look like prior to printing. This feature can help you adjust any discrepancies your letter format may contain. Having your letter positioned correctly on your stationary will lead to your positive and professional image.

Your Message: Give it a Nice Ring

Now that you have a general guide and plan for your business letter, making your document ring with a compelling reason for your reader to do business with you is important. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when writing your letter:

- **Remember who you're writing to.** Avoid high tech jargon or other confusing words that the reader may not be familiar with. Write with simple, easy-to-understand words that the reader can understand.
- **Be specific and clear.** Most people do not want to read a long-winded letter, so keep your letter concise. Have an objective when you write, and avoid covering details that are unnecessary for the reader.

- **Proved something of value.** Offering something of value to the reader can be a good way to keep interest and get future business. The right kind of value to the reader can sometimes be a clever way to make a connection and the possibility to do business in the future.
- **Ask for the business.** Don't be afraid to ask for the business within your business letter. Most good letters will attempt to close the sale with the reader.
- **Close with something positive or a thank you.** Finally, closing your letter with an upbeat statement or a thank you is a win/win situation for you as the real estate professional. After all, the reader did take the time to read your letter, why not end with a positive closing.
- **Check your spelling and have a friend proofread.** Use Spellcheck and, especially if you're sending the letter to many people, ask a trusted friend or colleague to proofread. You want to provide a polished, professional image, and typos will detract from that.

Rules for Good E-mails

E-mail can be a bit more informal than letters sent through the U.S. mail. However, there are several good rules to follow for effective e-mail communication with clients and colleagues. Follow these rules, even if you're just sending a quick update e-mail to buyers. You always want your message to give a positive reflection of who you are.

First, make sure your e-mail address is professional. Avoid using silly and off-beat e-mail addresses that contain slang or nicknames.

Next, use the subject line of the e-mail wisely. It should be short, descriptive, and compelling. Just as with a regular letter, the e-mail should open with a salutation.

For the body, avoid indenting and using special backgrounds that could be distracting or make it difficult for the recipient to read. The tone of the message should be professional; avoid using smiley-face emoticons or making jokes—humor is personal, and it's even harder to understand when it's in writing.

Close with a salutation and your contact information. Most e-mail programs allow you to create a "signature" with your name, address, and phone number. The signature can be automatically added to the end of each message.

Finally, e-mails should be short and easy to read. Lengthy e-mails can be a big turnoff. Show your prospects and clients that you respect their time, and keep your message to the point.

Use Letters to Stand Out

Understanding and implementing the essential elements of a business letter and e-mail can help you stand out from your competitors and prove that you're attentive to detail—the right person for the job. Remind yourself the next time you sit down to write that letter or e-mail that this piece of correspondence will tell consumers a lot who you are as a professional. It just might be the difference in getting your next transaction.

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