

Informal Letters

Purpose

- communication between two people who are usually familiar to each other
- topic on a personal level (introduction, personal report, invitation, etc.)

Sample Letter

56 Shamrock Avenue
Dublin, Ireland

24 October

Dear Laura,

This is Ruth Parker. Remember me? We used to be friends in primary school. We haven't seen each other for about 10 years- right?

Anyway, how are you? I've got your address from Debbie Turner. I hope you don't mind. What are you doing now? Are you working? You always wanted to be a police officer!

At the moment I'm studying medicine at the university here. I think I've changed a lot over the years. I'm not fond of heavy metal anymore- I prefer classical music now. Do you remember Tony Gibbs? He's on the same course as me and guess what- we're going out together!

Well, I must finish now because I've got an exam tomorrow. Write back soon and tell me all your news.

All the best,

Ruth

P.S. John Austin says hi.

Closing

- always necessary
- Examples:
Lots of love,
Love,
Yours,
All the best,
Take care,
Best regards,

Post Script

- not necessary

Address

- not always necessary
- has to be **your address** (address of the addressee is not needed)
- no name is needed

Date

- always necessary
- quite free format, e.g. 24 October 2011
24th October
Monday, 24 October

Salutation

- always necessary
- Dear ...,
Hi ...,
Hello ...,

Body

- has to be divided into **paragraphs**
- format of paragraphs: first line of each paragraph is indented or an empty line between paragraphs without indentation
- the **1st paragraph** should lead in the topic; starting examples:
 - *Thanks for your letter./ I've just received your letter and I'm writing at once because....*
 - *I'm sorry I haven't written for a while but I've been very busy.*
 - *Sorry for not writing so long.*
 - *It was great to hear from you again.*
 - *Thank you very much for answering my last letter so quickly.*

- use **short forms** like "I'm", "don't", etc.
- exclamation marks are also possible to give emphasis
- ask **questions** to motivate an answer
- the **last paragraph** should close the topic; examples:

- *I'm looking forward to hearing from you.*
- *I hope to see you soon.*
- *I've no more news at the moment.*
- *I hope to have a letter from you soon.*
- *Write me and let me know how you are getting on.*
- *I must end now but I'll write a longer letter next time.*
- *I can't think of anything else to write about at the moment.*
- *Bye for now. Take care and write me soon.*
- *Well, that's all for now.*

Useful Expressions

Saying thank you

- I'm just writing to thank you for.....
- It was very kind of you to
- Thanks very much for.....
- I am very grateful for...

Giving advice

- Well, if I were you, I would.....
- Have you thought about.....?
- In your last letter you said you weren't sure what to do about....
- I think you should/shouldn't.....
- In your last letter you asked me about....

Good news

- I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear that.....
- I feel sure that you'll be interested to know that....
- By the way, did you know that.....?
- You'll never guess what happened!
- I'm really glad/ happy to hear about...
- I was very happy to read that...

Bad news

- I'm sorry to tell you that.....
- Bad news, I'm afraid.
- I'm extremely sorry to hear/read that...
- It's so sad to hear/read about...

Asking for help

- I wonder if you could help me.
- I hope it's not too much to ask but.....
- I wonder if I could ask you a favour. Could you.....?

Apologising

- I'm writing to say sorry (for.....)
- I would like to apologise for.....
- I'm so sorry that...

1 Look at the phrases and match them with a purpose.

That reminds me,...
Why don't we...
I'd better get going...
Thanks for your letter...
Please let me know...
I'm really sorry...
Love,
Could you do something for me?
Write soon...
Did you know that..
I'm happy to hear that...

to finish the letter
to apologize
to thank the person for writing
to begin the letter
to change the subject
to ask a favor
before signing the letter
to suggest or invite
to ask for a reply
to ask for a response
to share some information

Write a letter to someone you knew well but haven't seen for a long time. Follow the stages.

Stage 1

Decide who you are writing to. An old school friend? Someone you met on holiday? An old teacher? A relative?
Think about these things:

- What is the person's name?
- Where and when did you meet him/her?
- What kind of person was he/she?
- What were his/her interests then?

Stage 2

Make notes about your life.

- What are you doing now?
- What were your interests then?
- How have your interests changed?

Stage 3

Now write your letter. Tell your friend about the changes in your life. Use Ruth's letter to help you.