

Email Writing

DATES

Dates can lead to problems. There isn't a right or wrong way of writing the date — you can choose the style that you prefer. But you must remember that American writers write the date with the month first, then the day, then the year. English writers put the day first, then the month, then the year.

US — MM/DD/YY

UK — DD/MM/YY

So, for example, let's say that today's date is 8 May 20XX. This can cause a lot of confusion when using abbreviated dates:

US — MM/DD/YY 05.08.XX

UK — DD/MM/YY 08.05.XX

They are both the same date, but they look completely different.

Exercise 1: Look at the following ways this date (8 May 20XX) can be written and decide whether it has been written in the American format (US) or the English format (UK).

a. 8/5/20XX	US	UK
b. 05/08/XX	US	UK
c. May 08, 20XX	US	UK
d. 08/05/XX	US	UK
e. 05.08.20XX	US	UK
f. 08 May XX	US	UK
g. 8th May 20XX	US	UK
h. May 8th, 20XX	US	UK
i. 8 May 20XX	US	UK
j. 08.05.20XX	US	UK
k. May 8th 20XX	US	UK

All of them are exactly the same date but if you don't know that the US and UK have different ways of writing then problems may occur, our advice to you is to always write the name of the month in full. For example, 8 May 20XX. Abbreviated dates can cause real confusion.

In the UK, the modern format of writing dates no longer includes any punctuation. For example, modern writers put 8 May 20XX instead of 8th May, 20XX.

SALUTATIONS

This is the part of the letter/email that always starts with the word “Dear”. This should be the easiest part of your letter/email, but it often causes real problems.

Rules

You must learn these rules to make sure that you use the correct salutation.

Recipient	Salutation
A law firm, company or institution	Dear Sir or Madam Dear Sirs,
Man, name unknown	Dear Sir,
Woman, name unknown	Dear Madam,
A person, name and sex unknown	Dear Sir or Madam,
Man, name known	Dear Mr. Thorley,
Woman, name known, married*	Dear Mrs. Ratcliffe,
Woman, name known, single*	Dear Miss Smith,
Woman, name known, marital status unknown*	Dear Ms. Pinto,
Married or unmarried couple, name unknown	Dear Sir and Madam,
Married couple, name known	Dear Mr and Mrs Clarkson
Unmarried couple, names known	Dear Mr Rice and Ms Matthews
2 men, names unknown	Dear Sirs,
2 women, names unknown	Dear Mesdames,
A person, name and particular title known	Dear Dr Gregson, Dear Judge Fox Dear Professor Silvestri
Friend or colleague	Dear Alison

*A warning about writing to women! The use of Mrs, Ms and Miss

It is sometimes difficult to know how to address a woman. You have to think about the person you are writing to. Unfortunately, there are no exact rules about this. Many married women like to be addressed as Mrs. (Name). However, it is not correct to assume that you can use this title for all women. Single women may be offended by this. Also, it is often the case that women qualify as lawyers or in some other profession under their maiden name (that is the name they used before getting married) and continue to practise under this

name, although they use their married name outside their professional life. So, a woman may be Ms Carruthers at work and Mrs Marston in her private life.

Similarly, it is wrong to use Miss for all women as this is thought by many women to be unsuitable for their age and status. The modern title of Ms is the preferred form of address by many women in the UK and the USA and is a safe form of title to use if you don't know much about the recipient.

American English

American English follows the same rules as above, but when writing to a law firm or company, the salutation 'Gentlemen:' is often used. If you use this, do not put *'Dear' before "Gentlemen:'

😊 Gentlemen:

☹️ Dear Gentlemen

American English includes a period, which is called a full stop in British English, after most titles (but not after Miss), like this:

- Dear Mr. Adams
- Dear Mrs. Berkely
- Dear Ms. Reauld
- Dear Prof. Hicks
- Dear Dr. Cains
- Dear Miss Kingston

Email language

Your first email to a person should follow the salutation rules that you have learned. After that, if you are having an email conversation, you don't need to continue using a salutation as it is not necessary and sounds unnecessarily formal.

In some countries the salutation "Dear Colleagues' is used when writing to a law firm. However, don't use "Dear Colleagues' when writing a formal letter to UK recipients because it is not considered to be acceptable. You can use this in an email if you want to, as it is more informal.

Exercise 1

Write the correct salutation to start your letter to each of the following recipients.

Example: *John Smith (a new client)*

Dear Mr Smith

a. Deborah Slater (a new client — you don't know if she is married)

Dear _____

b. Lowe and Steele solicitors (you don't know which solicitor is going to be dealing with this case)

Dear _____

c. Mattheis Schmit (a familiar client — you are on good terms with him)

Dear _____

d. Maria Gabanna (a lawyer in America)

Dear _____

e. Rebecca Wallis and Patrick Donaghue (new clients, brother and sister)

Dear _____

f. Martin Barley (a doctor)

Dear _____

g. RSGK Bank plc (you want to write to their legal department)

Dear _____

h. The ToolHire Company (you want to write to its Managing Director)

Dear _____

i. Jeremy and Patricia Simpson (new clients, they are a married couple)

Dear _____

j. Bella Robson (you know she is married, and she uses her married name)

Dear _____

k. Owner of Links Ltd (you know it is a woman, but you don't know anything else about her)

Dear _____

COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

It is important that you match the complimentary close with the salutation that you use.

Rules

You must learn these rules to make sure you use the correct close to your letter. An easy way of remembering is to check if you are using the recipient's name. If you are, you must end with "Yours sincerely". If you don't know the recipient's name, you have to end with "Yours faithfully"

Salutation	Complimentary close
Dear Sirs Dear Sir or Madam	Yours faithfully
Dear Sir	Yours faithfully
Dear Madam	Yours faithfully
Dear Sir or Madam	Yours faithfully
Dear Sir and Madam	Yours faithfully
Dear Mesdames	Yours faithfully
Dear Mr Thorley	Yours sincerely
Dear Mrs Ratcliffe	Yours sincerely
Dear Miss Singh	Yours sincerely
Dear Ms Pinto	Yours sincerely
Dear Mr and Mrs Clarkson	Yours sincerely
Dear Mr Rice and Ms Matthews	Yours sincerely
Dear Dr Gregson	Yours sincerely
Dear Judge Fox	Yours sincerely
Dear Professor Silvestri	Yours sincerely
Dear Alison	Yours sincerely

Exercise 1

Write the correct complimentary close to end your letter to each of the following recipients. Remember, if you know their name you need to end “Yours sincerely”. If you don't know their name, you must end “Yours faithfully”.

Example:

Dear Mr Smith - Yours sincerely

Dear Ms Slater	
Dear Sir or Madam	
Dear Mattheis	
Dear Ms Gabanna	
Dear Sir	
Dear Sirs	
Dear Mr and Mrs Simpson	
Dear Judge Barley	
Dear Madam	

SUBJECT LINES

Read these questions and answers and try to memorize the information.

- What is a subject line? It is like a heading to a letter.
- Do | have to include a subject line? Yes. The modern style of writing always includes a subject line.
- Why do | have to include a subject line? The purpose of a subject line is that when the recipient picks up the letter, he or she will immediately know what the letter is about.
- Where does it go?

Email language

The subject line should go in the subject box at the top of your email. Use the same amount of detail as you would in a formal letter.

THE BODY OF THE LETTER / Email

Read these questions and answers and try to memorize the information.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are you writing this letter? What is the purpose of your letter? 	<p>You should think about this throughout your letter and make sure that it is clear to the person who will read your letter.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I using the appropriate style and language for the recipient? 	<p>Always think about the person who is going to be reading your letter. The 'register' of the letter is important. Register means the tone and grade of language. If you are writing to another lawyer, the register of your letter will be different to a letter you are writing to a client who has no legal knowledge at all. Whatever style you choose for your letter, you must remember to use the same style throughout the letter. Don't mix the style in the same letter, as this is confusing. Be consistent.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I included the right amount of detail? 	<p>Again, think about the person who will be reading the letter. If you are writing to a client with no legal knowledge, you will need to explain any legal vocabulary that you use. You should not need to do this if you are writing to another lawyer.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is all the information relevant, accurate and clear? 	<p>If you are writing a letter of advice, check whether you have covered all the main points. Have you answered any questions that have been raised? Your letter should be clear and unambiguous. Don't include a lot of unimportant details.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I using the appropriate tone? 	<p>For example, is the letter friendly, formal, helpful, forceful? This is another part of register. In the same way as you use different tones of voice when you speak to someone, depending on whether you are pleased, angry, disappointed, informative etc, so the tone of your letters will vary. You have to make sure that you are using the right tone for the purpose of your letter,</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I set out my letter in short, concise blocks? 	<p>If you just write one or two long blocks of information, this is difficult to read. It is much better to divide the information into short paragraphs, with one main idea to each paragraph.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I using a logical order of sentences and paragraphs? 	<p>You need to check that there is a natural flow throughout the letter. There should be logical links between the sentences and paragraphs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are my sentences the right length? 	<p>If your sentences are too long, the reader will lose some of the detail. You should aim to use a maximum of 25 words in each sentence.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I used accurate grammar and punctuation? 	<p>Remember to check your letter carefully before it is sent. Accuracy is very important for lawyers. Look for spelling errors, correct use of prepositions, accurate tenses. It is very important in a formal letter not to use contractions or short forms, for example, I'm, don't, isn't, etc. Always write the two separate words in full.</p>

I'm
 I am

Don't
 Do not

Didn't
 Did not

I've
 I have

Remember this as a checklist for your letter:

Purpose Register Order Clarity Accuracy Layout Length	PROCALL
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To help you remember your checklist:
People **R**arely **O**rders **C**hampagne
 After **L**osing **L**itigation!

PUTTING A LETTER TOGETHER

Exercise 1

Here are the parts of a letter which have been jumbled up. It is a letter to a bank from one of the bank's customers. Put them into the correct order,



a It appears that this amount of £389.92 has been incorrectly debited from my account. This resulted in my being overdrawn on my account at the end of the month. You have then charged me a fee of £25 for an unauthorised overdraft.

b 27 Limetree Avenue
Chatsworth
CH4 7JL

c G Hardwick

d It shows a debit of £389.92 on 2 May 20XX. This transaction did not take place. However, I did use my debit card on that date to pay for a shirt which cost £38.99. I enclose a copy of the debit card receipt, which clearly shows this transaction.

e Yours faithfully

f 5 June 20XX

g I am not pleased about this. Please rectify this error immediately and refund the £25 overdraft fee to my account.

h Dear Sir
My Account number 6387290

i I look forward to hearing from you with confirmation that this error has been corrected.

j The Manager
HBCR Bank Plc
1 High Street
Chatsworth, CH1 4GP



k *Gary Hardwick*

l I am writing with reference to my bank statement dated 31 May 20XX, which shows the account as being overdrawn. However, on checking the statement it is clear that it contains an error.

1	3	5	7	9	11
2	4	6	8	10	12