

# **PHY1600S - Effective Communication for Physicists**

## **Formal Letter Styles**

The notes on the Formal Letter were prepared by Mr. Peter Hurley, based on information in the Web site <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/BusinessLetter.html>

If the sender is associated with an enterprise that has formal notepaper, a more formal header, used for official letters will often replace the sender's address shown in the samples below. One often used by members of the Department of Physics is provided at the end of this document.

A one line indicator of the subject of the letter, as shown below, may be inserted in any of these forms. This line appears indented on the line below the salutation, and is separated from the first line of the first paragraph by a space line. An example follows:

Dear Mr. X:

Re: Application for Advertised Position of Astronaut.

The first line of the first paragraph appears here.

### SAMPLE 1.

60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

March 15, 2005

Ms. Frederica Smith {*use Mr., Ms.; use an alternate only if you KNOW it is correct*}  
Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies  
Physics Department  
University of Toronto  
60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

Dear Ms. Jones: {note colon, not comma}

The most common formats for business letters are the block formats, and indented or semi-block format. The block format is demonstrated on this page. There seems to be no consensus about such fine points as whether to skip a line after your return address and before the date: some guidelines suggest that you do; others do not.

When you use the block form to write a business letter, all the information is typed flush left, with one-inch margins all around. First provide your own address, then skip a line and provide the date, then skip one more line and provide the inside address of the party to whom the letter is addressed. If you are using letterhead that already provides your address, do not retype that information; just begin with the date. For formal letters, avoid abbreviations where possible.

Skip another line before the salutation, which should be followed by a colon. Then write the body of your letter as illustrated here, with no indentation at the beginnings of paragraphs. Skip lines between paragraphs.

After writing the body of the letter, type the closing (use Sincerely, Yours truly, or Yours sincerely), followed by a comma, leave 3 blank lines, then type your name and title (if applicable), all flush left. Sign the letter in the blank space above your typed name.

Sincerely,

John Smith  
Physics Graduate Student

JD:ph { if typed by someone else - this means JD wrote the letter, ph typed it }  
 Encl. other documents { this informs the reader that other documents are enclosed }  
 cc: John Doe { this informs the reader that John Doe received a copy }

### SAMPLE 2.

60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

March 15, 2005

Ms. Frederica Smith                      *{use Mr. or Ms.; use an alternate only if you KNOW it is correct}*  
Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies  
Physics Department  
University of Toronto  
60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

Dear Ms. Jones: {note colon, not comma}

The most common formats for business letters are the block, modified block, and semi-block or indented. The modified block format is demonstrated on this page. There seems to be no consensus about such fine points as whether to skip a line after your return address and before the date: some guidelines suggest that you do; others do not.

If you are using the modified block form, place your address at the top, with the left edge of the address aligned with the centre of the page. Skip a line and type the date so that it lines up underneath your address. Type the inside address and salutation flush left; the salutation should be followed by a colon. For formal letters, avoid abbreviations.

Skip another line before the salutation, which should be followed by a colon. Then write the body of your letter as illustrated here, with no indentation at the beginnings of paragraphs. Skip lines between paragraphs.

Instead of placing the closing and signature lines flush left, type them in the centre, even with the address and date above, as illustrated here. Sign the letter in the blank space above your typed name.

Sincerely,

John Smith  
Physics Graduate Student

JD:ph {if typed by someone else - this means JD wrote the letter, ph typed it}  
Encl. other documents {this informs the reader that other documents are enclosed}  
cc: John Doe {this informs the reader that John Doe received a copy}

### SAMPLE 3.

60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

March 15, 2005

Ms. Frederica Smith                      {*use Mr. or Ms.; use an alternate only if you KNOW it is correct*}  
Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies  
Physics Department  
University of Toronto  
60 Saint George Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A7

Dear Ms. Jones: {note colon, not comma}

The most common formats for business letters are the block formats, and indented or semi-block format. The indented format is demonstrated on this page. There seems to be no consensus about such fine points as whether to skip a line after your return address and before the date: some guidelines suggest that you do; others do not.

If you are using the indented form, place your address at the top, with the left edge of the address aligned with the centre of the page. Skip a line and type the date so that it lines up underneath your address. Type the inside address and salutation flush left; the salutation should be followed by a colon. For formal letters, avoid abbreviations.

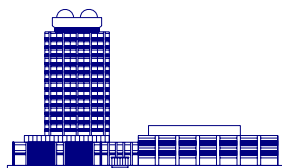
Skip another line before the salutation, which should be followed by a colon. Indent the first line of each paragraph one-half inch. Skip lines between paragraphs, as illustrated here. Skip lines between paragraphs.

Instead of placing the closing and signature lines flush left, type them in the centre, even with the address and date above, as illustrated here. Sign the letter in the blank space above your typed name.

Sincerely,

John Smith  
Physics Graduate Student

JD:ph {if typed by someone else - this means JD wrote the letter, ph typed it}  
Encl. other documents {this informs the reader that other documents are enclosed}  
cc: John Doe {this informs the reader that John Doe received a copy}



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