

Writing file 1 | Teacher's notes

Learning objectives in this lesson

Writing a formal letter and introducing a person and/or company to potential clients.

- 1 If appropriate, start the lesson by asking if any students have written or received a letter of introduction. Ask them to suggest the type of information they would expect such letters to contain. Ask students to brainstorm what they might expect from a letter based on the scenario in exercise 1, i.e. a letter from a new employee to an existing customer.

Suggested answers

Students may suggest such things as: saying who they are and what they do; stating what the company does; explaining why they are writing to the person now; saying how they can be contacted; updating the client on new products / services / offers; suggesting a meeting, etc.

Ask students to read the letter very quickly to see if their ideas were included. Then put them in pairs to discuss their findings before taking class feedback.

- 2 Ask students to try to identify the purpose of each paragraph. Then ask them to work in pairs to see if their ideas are the same.

Answers

Paragraph 1 – Reason for writing
Paragraph 2 – Personal background
Paragraph 3 – Company information
Paragraph 4 – Inviting a reply / further contact

- 3 Ask students to work in pairs and think how the letter might change if the situation is different. That is, if the letter is being written to a potential new client rather than an existing one.

Suggested answer

Paragraph 1 – Reason for writing: No change – remains the reason for writing. (Of course, they wouldn't need to say they are new to the job / have taken over from someone – just say what they do and why they are writing.)

Paragraph 2 – Personal background: Change to background of the company.

Paragraph 3 – Company information: Change to product information.

Paragraph 4 – Inviting a reply: Add information on how to become a customer.

Remind students that they should sign off with *Yours sincerely* if they use the person's name and *Yours faithfully* if they use *Dear Sir / Madam*. As a memory device you can explain the rule, 'never have two S's'. So when you start with *Sir* you don't end with *Sincerely*.

- 4 Ask students to work in pairs to order the pieces of advice given, and to see if it matches their own ideas from exercise 3. After a couple of minutes go through the answers with the class.

Answers

- 1 Identify yourself and your company or organization.
- 2 Mention a brief history of your company.
- 3 Highlight your main products or services and briefly mention why cooperation might be mutually beneficial.
- 4 Inform the reader how to purchase your products or services and where they can find further information about them.
- 5 Try to set up a meeting with the person you are writing to.
- 6 Express the hope that the reader will become a client of your company and include the promise of fruitful cooperation.
- 7 End with *Yours sincerely* (or *Yours faithfully* if you use *Dear Sir / Madam*).

- 5 Ask students to look at the letter and underline what they think are the equivalent key phrases in the letter. Check their answers and ask them to decide which of the alternatives is more formal.

Answers

- 1 I'm writing to you to – The purpose of this letter is to
- 2 I'm making contact – I am contacting you now
- 3 to use this chance – to take the opportunity
- 4 As you know – As you are aware
- 5 Until then – In the meantime
- 6 Feel free to get in touch with me – Please don't hesitate to contact me

1–6 are all less formal than those in the letter. The first one is on a par but as a contraction has been used it makes it less formal.

- 6 Tell students to write six sentences about themselves using exponents from the list of alternatives in exercise 5. After a few minutes get them to compare sentences in pairs and see if they used the same phrases and to try to check each others' work for mistakes.

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7 Tell your students that they are going to prepare a letter to introduce themselves and their company to a potential client.

1 Ask them to write a list of things they would include in their own letter. After a few minutes, ask them to compare their lists in pairs.

2 Then get students to organize the information on the list into appropriate paragraphs, remind them they can use the checklist provided in exercise 4. Do a quick check to see if they all have similar paragraph orders.

Extra activity

Before students move on to actually writing the letter, this guessing game provides an opportunity for more controlled practice. Get each student to prepare two sentences that might be in the letter. They should not show these to their colleagues. When everyone is ready, nominate one student to read their sentence aloud and ask the class to decide which paragraph it would go into and if the language is correct. Repeat the process with the other students until all have read both of their sentences. Address any issues that may arise, e.g. if they all used the wrong formality or structure.

3 Ask students to write the full letter. This can be done on a computer and sent to you as an email attachment for homework or it can be done on paper in class. Students could work in pairs to write the letters.

Evaluation tips

When marking look for relevant information, sensible paragraphing and logical ordering. Don't forget to comment on content as well as accurate use of language.

Sample answer

Your company name
Your company address
Date

Your customer's name
Your customer's address

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to you as the Sales Manager of Cornwell Press, a small, family-owned publishing company based in the South West of England. We are looking for distributors across Europe to manage our titles.

Cornwell Press was established in 1956 by James Redding and has developed into one of the leading independent travel publishing companies in the UK. Our titles include specialist books on touring and walking in the United Kingdom and Europe. I have enclosed a catalogue of our titles for your reference.

We are currently looking for new partners to manage our list in different countries throughout Europe. We would like to arrange exclusive agreements that will be highly beneficial to both partners.

If you are interested in developing a partnership, I will be in your area early next month and we could arrange a meeting to discuss things further.

I hope you will welcome this opportunity to build a successful partnership and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours faithfully

Liza Fernung
Accounts Manager