

***Characteristics of* Formal Letters**

1- Formal language requires correct use of vocabulary and impeccable grammar and spelling. The deal must be distant and respectful.

The sender's treatment of the recipient must be yours; Never be tutear, regardless of the age or rank of the recipient, or whether or not this is known by the sender.

While language should be respectful, this does not mean that kindness and courtesy should be left aside.

2- Concrete intention

No formal letter is written without a precise intention and a definite purpose. With this type of letter is intended to communicate something to the recipient or request information that the sender needs it.

In any case, it is sought to positively impress the recipient and favorably predispose him to continue the flow of communication until the sender's objectives are met. The information provided should be as clear and complete as possible.

3- The Length

The formal letter is usually brief and concrete, aiming directly at the objective, after the corresponding greetings and rules of courtesy.

As usually happens in the institutional, business, governmental or between two people who do not have a close relationship, it does not make sense to walk through the branches, to digress or to explain subjects that are not the central ones. In this way, formal letters generally should not exceed 2 pages.

4- The Header

The formal letter must be written on official stationery of the entity or person who writes it. It is usually done on letterhead sheets where only the name of the institution or sender may appear, but may also include the address of the institution or sender.

After this the date must appear, preceded by the place (city) where it is being written

5- Treatment and greeting

The treatment must be formal and should include the position, profession or rank of the recipient. For example: President, Doctor, Professor, General, etc., followed or not of the surname. You should avoid greeting the first name, nicknames or motes.

When the recipient is a couple, it must be treated as Lord and Lady. The deputies and senators are given the treatment of "Honorable" in some countries, in others it may be "Most Illustrious Lord."

The same happens with other governmental positions or nobility titles, reason why it is important to know the protocol of each country.

If a specific recipient is not known, impersonal formulas such as "To whom it may concern" or simply "Dear Sir" or "Dear Lady" may be used.

For the greeting you must add some courtesy rule like "Dear", "Respected", etc. We also use the form "Dear Lord" as a formal greeting.

6- The Body

The contents of the letter should also begin with a courtesy rule such as: "Through the present...", "I address you...", "Very respectfully I address you on the occasion of...", "Serve the present For..." or some a little less protocolary like "First of all receive a cordial greeting...".

The letter should have short, well structured paragraphs. The message must be precise, concrete and unambiguous.

If it is a request it must be done directly; If it is an information letter, it must go straight to the point. Always keep in mind that the recipient is a busy person who does not want to waste time with unnecessary or difficult to understand speeches.

7- The farewell

The farewell must round out the central idea of the letter, reinforce the objective and promote the action that the sender expects from the recipient ("I am waiting for your reply", "I hope the information is useful", etc.).

The most common closure for formal letters is "Sincerely" or "Very sincerely," preferring these forms to more colloquial ones such as "A cordial greeting", "Greetings", etc.