

Živa riječ

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POLITE FORMS OF ADDRESS¹

Students of English often do not know how to write a letter in an acceptable form in English. Even though they have already learnt a lot of English, they are uncertain about forms of address at the beginning and at the end of a letter, and the way to express such things as condolences. In the tables given below you can find expressions you could use when writing a letter in English.

1. Beginnings² and Endings³

Dear John,	With best wishes, Yours, Bill	a personal letter to a friend
	Best wishes, Yours sincerely, Bill	
	Yours, Bill	
Dear Mr Brown,	Yours sincerely, W. H. Smith	an informal private letter to a person you know personally but not very well
Dear Sir, ----- Dear Madam,	Yours faithfully, W. H. Smith	a formal private letter to a person you do not know personally

¹ The forms we are dealing with here are generally used in correspondence. But note, however, that it is accepted in modern English usage to avoid separate forms of address when writing and when speaking.

² or salutation, opening greeting

³ or complimentary close

Dear Sir,	Yours faithfully, W. H. Smith	a business letter
Dear Madam,	Yours truly, W. H. Smith	
Dear Sir or Madam,		

Exercise 1

Say how you would begin and end the following letters:

- Thank you for your letter of 28th December and the scholarship application forms which I now return, duly completed and with the necessary photographs attached.
 - Many thanks for your letter. We were delighted to hear from you. We are all anxious to see you again.
- Please give your parents my kind regards.

Exercise 2

What beginning and ending would you use when writing a letter to each of the following:

- a school friend
- a man named George Newton. He is a friend of your father. You have met him once, when he came to visit your father.
- the headmaster of your school.
- a firm.

2. Forms of Request and Replies

I should be very grateful if you would send me...) ¹	very polite form, used in business letters	We have pleasure in sending you	We are very sorry that we are unable to send you...
Would you be kind enough to send me...) ¹	most commonly used in business letters		I am enclosing...
Would you please send me...) ²		used when writing to a friend or a colleague	I am sending you...
Please send me...) ²			

¹ formal

² most commonly used

This table cannot cover all the possible sentences a student might want, but by changing these sentences slightly and by using normal, everyday English he will be able to convey what he wants to say.

Here is a short letter and two possible replies:

(Mr Chandler wants to see his son's headmaster, Mr Jones)

Dear Mr Jones,

I should like to meet you to discuss my son's progress. Could you please suggest a day and time convenient to you. I shall be free any day during the coming week.

Yours sincerely,
D. K. Chandler

Dear Mr Chandler,

Thank you for your letter of May 12th. I would like to suggest that we meet on Monday at 10 a.m. in my office at the school. I am looking forward to seeing you then.

Yours sincerely,
P. C. Jones

Dear Mr Chandler,

Thank you for your letter dated May 12. Unfortunately I am leaving for France tomorrow and shall be away for about ten days. I shall therefore be unable to keep our appointment. However, immediately upon my return I will contact you to arrange another meeting.

I apologize for this change and hope that it does not inconvenience you. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,
P. C. Jones

Exercise 3

Find the expression of request in the above letter and state in which category it falls (a, b, c or d)

Exercise 4

- Write to a friend to ask him to lend you a typewriter.
- A friend has written to you to ask you to lend him or her some money. Write a reply.

3. Thanking

Thank you for your kind and prompt attention to my request	formal, used in business letters
Thank you very much for ...	used in letters to companies, colleagues or friends
Many thanks for ...	to a friend

Exercise 5

Write a short letter to your friend

- a) thanking him for the lovely time you had at his party
- b) thanking him for the present he gave you

4. Apologies

I would like to apologize for not having...	to a firm or a colleague
I am writing to apologize for not having...	to a friend or a colleague
I am very sorry I did not...	to a friend
I am so sorry I did not...	
I am terribly sorry I did not...	
Paul, I am very sorry I did not) ¹	

Exercise 6

Write to apologize to a friend for being unable to meet him or her as previously arranged.

5. Greetings, Congratulations and Good Wishes

I Greetings

Many happy returns of the day	for a birthday	to a friend, a colleague or an acquaintance
Happy birthday		
Happy anniversary	for a wedding anniversary	
Congratulations and best wishes on your anniversary		
A merry Christmas and a happy New Year	for Christmas and the New Year	

¹ In general try to be sincere without being verbose. The most sincere apology of course is one personally delivered. The forms given above can be applied equally to written and verbal apologies.

II Congratulations

Congratulations on your marriage and best wishes to you both	on a marriage	to a friend, a colleague or an acquaintance
Congratulations to the Bride and Groom		
Congratulations on your new job	on success in obtaining a job	
Congratulations on your examination success	on success in an examination	

III Good Wishes

Good luck in your examination	for an examination	to a friend, a colleague or an acquaintance
My best wishes for your success in the examination you will be taking		
I wish you the best of luck in your examination		
Best wishes for a speedy recovery	to someone in hospital	

6. Condolences on a death

Please accept my very sincere condolences in your great loss	to a friend, a colleague or an acquaintance
Heartfelt condolences in your great loss	
With deepest sympathy	