**Appendix A**

Formatting Letters and Email Messages

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# Description of Appendix A

This appendix covers basic formats for letters, envelopes, memos, email messages, and state and province abbreviations. Some organizations use alternate formats not included here. Some organizations demand that writers use a specific format; some allow writers to choose their own formats.

The learning objectives include:

* LO A-1 Formats for letters.
* LO A-2 Formats for letters.
* LO A-3 Formats for letters.

# Essentials to Cover

Stress the following points.

* There are three main formats for letters:
  + Block
  + Modified block
  + Simplified
* All three formats single-space paragraphs, double-space between paragraphs, and line up the date and the signature block. They differ in where they put the date and the signature, in the salutation and close, and in paragraph indentation.
* In a memo, line up all the items in the To/From/Subject block; initial the document, and use a subject line. In Chapter 15, Figure 15.8 shows an example of an informative report in memo format.
* Most email programs prompt you to supply the various parts of the format. Some aspects of email are still evolving. For example, some writers treat email messages as if they were informal letters; some treat them as memos.
* The lesson plans below suggest ways to present this material and may give you some ideas for additional topics to cover if time permits.

# Strategies for Increasing Learning

Students must know the information in this appendix, yet asking them to sit down and just study it is unlikely to work. You might find it useful to use this appendix as a reference. On the first day of class, show students what Appendix A includes and tells them that you expect every assignment they produce for the class to be submitted in the proper format. Repeat this requirement on your syllabus, grading standards handout, and assignment sheets. For the first assignment of each type (that is, the first memo, the first letter, the first email message), spend a few minutes going over format conventions. After that, tell students to look at Appendix A for guidance when they have questions.

# Lesson Plan Ideas

Most instructors teach this material in one of the following two ways.

## Teaching Formats All at Once

*50 minutes*

If time permits, you may want to spend a day covering the different formats for letters, memos, and emails using Figure A.1 through Figure A.5 in the text.

## Teaching Formats as Needed

*10-minute segments throughout the course*

Another way to discuss formats is to assign the reading at the beginning of the course and then discuss the specific examples when they are appropriate. For instance, when the first memo/letter/email message is written, the appropriate format should be discussed. Going over formats again before the job unit can also be useful.

# Question of the Day

To encourage learners to read assignments, you may want to begin the class period with a quick quiz question. Having a quiz at the beginning of class also encourages learners to be on time and eliminates separate time needed to call the roll. To save grading time, you can have learners switch papers and grade each other’s; this doubles the class time needed but saves your time later.

An appropriate question for Appendix A:

**Question:** Explain the similarities and differences between block format and modified block format.

**Answer:** *Similarities:* Both block and modified block single-space paragraphs and double-space between them. They use a salutation and complimentary close, type the writer’s name using regular capital/lowercase letters, and include the writer’s signature.

*Differences:* Block places the date and signature block at the left margin, while modified block moves them over to the right one-half or two-thirds of the way on the page. Paragraph indentation is optional in modified block but it is never done in block.

# Key Concepts Quiz

A Key Concepts Quiz for Appendix A follows. This quiz gives you a quick way to assess your students' understanding of the most important concepts in this appendix. Answers are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. F | 5. D |
| 2. F | 6. C |
| 3. T | 7. D |
| 4. F | 8. A |

9. Letters normally go to people outside your organization; memos go to people in your organization. Letters and memos do not necessarily differ in length, formality, writing style, or pattern or organization. However, they do differ in format.

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ of 10 points Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Key Concepts Quiz for Appendix A

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | T | F | Even if you call someone by his or her first name in person, letter format requires that you use a courtesy title and the reader's last name in the salutation. (1 pt.) |
| 2. | T | F | The standard format for email messages is identical to letter style. (1 pt.) |
| 3. | T | F | When a letter runs two or more pages, letterhead stationery should be used only for the first page. (1 pt.) |
| 4. | T | F | A subject line can be used in the simplified style only. (1 pt.) |

5. In which of the following letter formats is the date and signature block lined up at the left margin? (1 pt.)

1. Block
2. Modified block
3. Simplified
4. Block and Simplified

6. You have received a letter that is addressed to someone else. At the end of the letter is typed “bcc: [your name].” Which of the following is the BEST explanation? (1 pt.)

1. The writer wants you to file the letter without reading it.
2. The writer wants you to call the person to whom it is addressed and discuss it.
3. The writer does not want the recipient to know that you have received the copy.
4. The writer decided to send you a copy after mailing the original to the recipient.

7. You have received a letter that is unsigned and in which the writer's name is typed in all capitals. Which of the following is the BEST explanation? (1 pt.)

1. The writer forgot to sign the letter.
2. The writer cannot write legibly.
3. The typist was inexperienced.
4. The letter is in Simplified

8. You are writing to a new client. Which of the following would be the BEST complimentary close? (1 pt.)

1. Sincerely
2. Thanks!
3. Yours respectfully
4. Yours for better future

9. What is the difference between letters and memos? (2 pts.)