LECTURES 2 and 3 The business letter structure. British business letter layout versus American business letter layout

Plan

1 How to structure a business letter

2 Main rules of introducing obligatory and nonobligatory business letter structural elements

3 Structural elements functionality

4 British business letter layout

5 American business letter layout

6 British business letter versus American business letter

**Литература**

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Foreign learners of English commercial correspondence should be a­ware of drawing a sharp distinction between British and American styles. The fact is that the similarities are more striking than the differences, and the differences between British and American English in general are fewer and less important now than they were, say, fifteen or twenty years ago. For correspondence purposes it is quite enough to be familiar with one particular layout(схема, планировка) and one particular set of conven­tions, since Americans have no difficulty in understanding British busi­ness letters, and vice versa. Another point to bear in mind is the fact that the majority of business letters today are written, not by Americans or British people, but by individuals and firms using English as a for­eign language. This is another factor which has caused the two styles to merge to a very considerable extent.

Currently there are several structural parts, that any business letter may consist of. They are:

# **1 The heading (the letter head) or the sender’s address**

# 2 The reference

# **3** *The date*

*4 Special Mailing Indications*

*5 Confidential*

**6 *The inside address (the recipient’s address)***

*7 For the attention of*

**8 *The salutation***

*9 The subject*

*10 The body of the letter*

***11 The close***

*12 The signature*

*13 Initials of Persons in Charge*

*14 Enclosures*

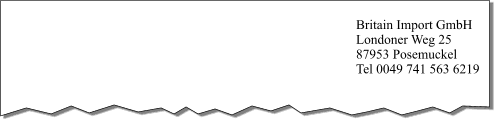
*15 Copies*

*16 PostScript P.S.*

## 1)The heading ( the letter head) or the sender’s address (Заголовок или адрес отправителя) The heading usually indicates the name of the firm (“ BROWN AND SMITH , LIMITED”), the nature of the business (“ Steam Turbines”), its postal and telegraphic address and its telephone number. The heading or the business addressis usually printed on the firm’s stationery at the top of the page, perhaps with a logo. Don't rewrite your address if you use paper with a ready-printed sender's address. If not, insert the name of business, then house number and street, then town and district, area code. There is no need to use commas after each of these categories and do not put the name with the address. There are two possibilities of putting telephone and fax numbers: either beneath your business address after a space or below at the bottom of the page.

## British English

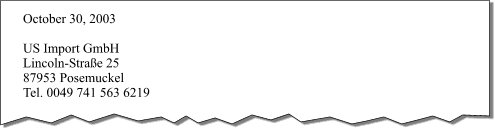
**Position**: In British English, the sender's address is usually placed in the top right corner of the letter.



## American English

**Position**: In American English the sender's address is usually placed in the top left corner below (sometimes after the date).

Sender's address below the date:



2)The reference.(Номер документа: входящая и исходящая корреспонденция)) This may be typed1) on the same line as the date, but on the left, 2)either against the left margin or3) against the right margin after the sender’s address and is used to help work with business letters. Your ref. is used when getting a letter and Our Ref. –when answering a letter .The reference consists sometimes of the initials of the author and the person who actually signs the letter (in this case J B \ AS) or numbers .( 661/ 17)

**Why put a reference line?** You should use a reference line if the recipient has requested specific information, such as a job number or invoice number, or if you’re replying to a letter. This makes it easier for the recipient to get a speedy response to you.

3)***The date. (Дата)*** It should give the number of the day, the name of the month and the number of the year. In that order 13 July, 2010 — is probably the simplest and clearest of all the current forms used in the English-speaking world, but there are alternative ways of writing the date, for example:

July 13, 2010 July 13 2010 (Americans put the name of the month first),

13th July 2010 13th July, 2010 and July 13th 2010

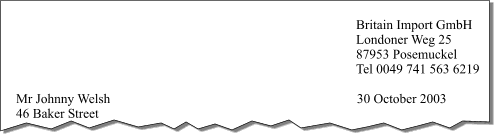
Some firms still insist on a comma before the year, but others consider this unnecessary. Another practice widely used in Europe is to write the date in a highly abbreviated form — 12.7.10, for example — but this should not be done in letters written in English, since in Britain 12.7.10 means 12 July 2010, whereas in the U.S.A. it means December 7 2010. It is obvious that the use of such forms could result in con­fusion.

## There are three possibilities of putting the date: directly under your business address, telephone and fax numbers and email address after a space OR above the name and address of the person you are writing to OR beneath the name and address of the person you are writing to. If the firm’s stationery is used , the date is usually printed on the right hand side.

## British English

**Write**: 30 October 2003

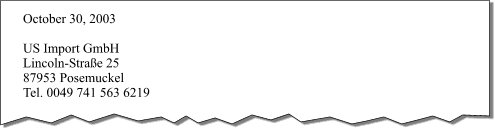
**Position**: on the right, one line below the sender's address (in letters with a ready-printed sender's address, the date can also be put in the top left corner)



## American English

**Write**: October 30, 2003

**Position**: top left corner (sometimes centered)



**Why put the date?** It’s standard practice to include the date on which the letter was written. Correspondence is often filed in date order. It makes it much easier for the recipient to send a timely reply, and easier for you to chase up an answer if necessary. Eg. “In my letter of May 15…

***(4) Special Mailing Indication ( специальные почтовые пометки)***

If the letter is not sent by ordinary mail, a special indication is given below the date. For example: Express Mail. Registered Mail. But quite often it is omitted.

***(5) Confidential ( уведомление о конфиденциальности***) This indicates that the letter is appointed for a definite person. It is usually written below ***Special Mailing Indication*** or below ***the Date if Special Mailing Indication*** is not given***.***

**PERSONAL  
CONFIDENTIAL  
PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL  
STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**(6)*The inside address.*** **(the recipient’s address)(**Адресат) A few points concerning the name and address of the firm written to need to be made. The letter itself must always begin with the name and full address of the correspondent. They are typed on the left, normally against the margin slightly lower than the date or on the same line.

**Limited liability company Ultrasonic Ltd. Universal Airways Ltd.**

Partnership Smith **& Co**

Limited partnership R. Nash **& Son Ltd.**

Partnerships usually take the designation “Messrs” (pronounced as {mesiz} which is an abbreviated form of Mes­sieurs, the French word for Gentlemen.( **Messrs. Smith& Co.,** Messrs. Hamilton and Jacobs ) but it should not be used in front of the name of a limited company, nor should it appear with the names of firms which indicate their line of business “The National Transport Company”, and do not consist of family names or where the firm-name begins with a title or the name is impersonal.( “Sir John Watson and Sons”, “Smith Brown, Ltd.”)

Messrs. Hamilton and Jacobs

265 High Holborn

London

WC1 7GS

GREAT BRITAIN

# If the recipient’s first and last names are known, use abbreviations Ms / Miss / Mrs / Mr

# If the recipient’s name is unknown one can use only his post (The Finance Director or The Sales Manager)

# Recipient's Address in a Business Letter

Messrs / Ms / Miss / Mrs / Mr

house number, street

place

area code

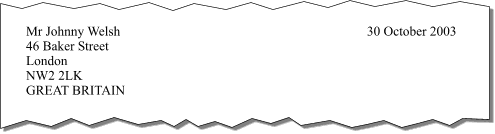
COUNTRY (in capital letters)

In American English, the area code is usually at the same level as the place, separated by a comma.

## British English

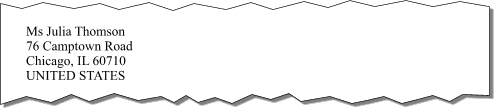
**Position**: on the left

In British English, the recipient's address starts on the same line as the date or one line below the date.



## American English

In American English, the recipient's address starts two lines below the sender's address (or two lines below the date if the sender's address isn't placed in the top left corner).



*7) For the attention of. (Указание на желательность ознакомления)* This indicates the sender wishes a certain person to get acquainted with the contents of the letter. It is usually written below the **inside address.**

For ex. **For the attention of the Production Manager or Attn: Production Manager**

**(8) *The salutation.* (Обращение)** Below the address or sometimes *For the attention of* a double space is left, and the words 'Dear Sirs' are typed. This is the usual salutation in British business letters addressed to a company rather than to an individual within the company. It is standard to use a comma (colon in North America) after the salutation, but an increasing number of firms are eliminating this, considering the spacing to fulfill the function of traditional punctuation. Once again, there are no hard-and-fast 'rules', but every firm will have its own policy. In the U.S.A. the most common salutation is 'Gentlemen:'. The position of the salutation is against the left-hand margin. The salutation “Sir” is used for all Government correspondence and for very formal business letters.

When writing to an individual within the firm use the salutation 'Dear Sir' ('Dear Madam' if the recipient is known to be a woman), or 'Dear Mr ', 'Dear Mrs ', 'Dear Miss ' or 'Dear Ms(госпожа) ' if the addressee is addressed by name rather than by position.

In recent years the use of the form **Ms** has become quite com­mon. It originated in the U.S.A. and, like its 'male' equivalent **Mr**, it does not indicate whether the person addressed is married or unmarried. If you know the person you are writing to very well or are on friendly terms, begin simply with the first name, **Dear Mary**or**Dear Henry**.When you don't know the name of a person and cannot find this information out you may write, "To Whom It May Concern".) Here are some common ways to address the recipient:

* Dear Mr Powell,
* Dear Ms Mackenzie,
* Dear Frederick Hanson:
* Dear Editor-in-Chief:
* Dear Valued Customer
* Dear Sir or Madam:
* Dear Madam
* Dear Sir,
* Dear Sirs
* Gentlemen:

# Salutation in a Business Letter

## If you know the person's name:

Dear Ms / Miss / Mrs / Mr / Dr + surname

Dear Mr Miller

You can also write the person's full name. In this case, leave out the title (Mr/Mrs). This way of writing the salutation is very handy if you don't know the gender of the person.

Dear Chris Miller

## If you don't know the person's name:

There are several possibilities to address people that you don't know by name:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| salutation | when to use |
| Dear Sir / Dear Sirs | male addressee (esp. in British English) |
| Gentlemen | male addressee (esp. in American English) |
| Dear Madam | female addressee (esp. in British English) |
| Ladies | female addressee (esp. in American English) |
| Dear Sir or Madam | gender unknown (esp. in British English) |
| Ladies and Gentlemen | gender unknown (esp. in American English) |
| To whom it may concern | gender unknown (esp. in American English) |

Business partners often call each other by their first names. In this case, write the salutation as follows:

Dear Sue

## Punctuation

In British English, don't use any punctuation mark or use a comma.

Dear Mr Miller or Dear Mr Miller,

In American English, use a colon:

Dear Mr. Miller:

## Ms, Miss or Mrs?

* Mrs – to address a married woman
* Miss – to address an unmarried woman (rarely used now)
* Ms – to address a woman whose marital status you don't know; also used to address an unmarried woman

**Why put a greeting?** Business letters are a formal type of writing, and it’s considered polite to start with a greeting. Although you can get away with starting emails “Hi” or “Hello”, letters follow more conservative conventions.

*(9) The subject (заголовок к тексту)*It is frequently adopted to head the letter, immediately after the salutation, with a few words indicating its subject or contents.

Sometimes the heading may begin with the word SUBJECT or the preposition “re” {ri:} (regarding) . The subject enables the reader to see at once what is to deal with. The letter may accordingly be passed immediately to the person or department interested in it.

Re.: Order № 12 for “ Volga” Cars

These headings are particularly useful in the foreign trade, when many letters on one subject may be exchanged at intervals of some weeks.

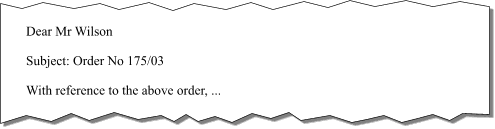
# Subject Line in a Business Letter

There are three common methods to distinguish the subject line from the body of the letter:

* Use "Subject:" or "Re:"
* Type the subject in bold letters
* Type the subject in capital letters

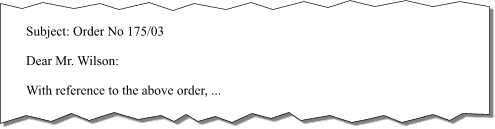
## British English

The subject line is usually placed between the salutation and the body of the letter (with a blank line in between).



## American English

In American English, the subject line can be placed between the recipient's address and the salutation (with a blank line in between).



**Why put the subject?** It’s a good idea to include a subject so that the recipient can see at a glance what the letter refers to. Try to be succinct but include as much information as possible, eg. “Funding application from Joe Bloggs, candidate 222-456”.

*(10) The body of the letter.*  As far as the body of the letter is concerned there are some rules that apply to every business letter. If the letter is short and deals with only one fact or item, the body should consist of only one paragraph. If one paragraph is all you need, don't write an extra paragraph just to make your letter look longer. If you need use a few short paragraphs to go into greater detail about your main point. Inthe body of the letter The Opening Paragraph and The Closing paragraph are obligatory.

*The Opening Paragraph* This will often state the subject-matter and the writer’s feelings on the subject. Expressions of pleasure, regret, surprise, gratitude and other feelings are normally conveyed in an opening paragraph. It also states as early as possible the date of the letter, if any , which is being answered.

We thank you for your letter of the 18th April with the proof-copy of our latest price list enclosed.

The opening paragraph normally contains no negative statements. Business letters start usually with some friendly phrases which are to have a “ a built-in-smile’ Here are some examples:

* I hope you are enjoying a fine summer.
* Thank you for your kind letter of January 5th.
* I came across an ad for your company in *The Star* today.
* It was a pleasure meeting you at the conference this month.
* I appreciate your patience in waiting for a response.

After your short opening, state the main point of your letter in one or two sentences:

* I'm writing to enquire about...
* I'm interested in the job opening posted on your company website.
* We'd like to invite you to a members only luncheon on April 5th.

*The Closing paragraph.*  Very frequently in business letters your last paragraph should include requests, reminders, and notes on enclosures. If necessary, your contact information should also be in this paragraph.,

Here are some common phrases used when closing a business letter:

* I look forward to...
* Please respond at your earliest convenience.
* I should also remind you that the next board meeting is on February 5th.
* For futher details...
* If you require more information...
* Thank you for taking this into consideration.
* I appreciate any feedback you may have.
* Enclosed you will find...
* Feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Many of the closing phrases have become stereotyped and hackneyed: (избитые фразы)

*Assuring you of our best attention at all times*

*Thanking you in anticipation of a favourable reply*

If you are including sensitive material, such as rejecting an offer or informing an employee of a layoff period, use it in the second paragraph Here are some common ways to express unpleasant facts:

* We regret to inform you...
* It is with great sadness that we...
* After careful consideration we have decided...

# Body of a Business Letter

Capitalise the first word of the text (even if the salutation ends with a comma). The text is left-justified and a blank line is put after each paragraph. It is not common to indent the first line of a paragraph.

## Content

* first paragraph: introduction and reason for writing
* following paragraphs: explain your reasons for writing in more detail, provide background information etc.
* last paragraph: summarise your reason for writing again and make clear what you want the recipient to do

***11) The complementary close.*** ***(завершение***)This is typed below the closing paragraph . If the salutation is 'Dear Sirs' or 'Dear Sir', the complimentary close will read 'Yours faithfully' or, less commonly, 'Yours truly'. If the correspondent is addressed by his or her name — 'Dear Mr Brown', (the letter is more personal)'Dear Miss James', etc. — the complimentary close will take the form 'Yours sincerely'. If you know the person you are writing to well, it may be appropriate to insert a closing formula, such as **With very best wishes**,

Use a comma after the closing .If you do not use a comma or colon in your salutation, leave out the comma after the closing phrase:

* Yours truly,
* Yours sincerely,
* Sincerely,
* Sincerely yours
* Thank you,
* Best wishes
* All the best,
* Best of luck
* Warm regards,

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name and address | Salutation | Complimentary close |
| Southern Airways Ltd. 250 Oxford Street London Wl 7TM | Dear Sirs | Yours faithfully (Yours truly) |
| The Marketing Manager Software Ltd. Richmond Surrey SFY3DF | Dear Sir | Yours faithfully (Yours truly) |
| Ms J. Faulkner British Films Ltd. 3 Wardour St. London Wl 5JN | Dear Ms Faulkner | Yours sincerely |

# The close in a Business Letter

## British English

If you used the recipient's name in the salutation, use 'sincerely'.

If you did not use the recipient's name in the salutation, use 'faithfully'.

## American English

Use 'sincerely', no matter if you used the recipient's name in the salutation or not ('faithfully' is not common in American English).

## Salutation - Close

### British English

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Salutation | Greeting |
| Dear Ms Wexley Dear Jane Wexley Dear Jane | Yours sincerely / Sincerely yours |
| Dear Sir Dear Sirs Dear Madam Dear Sir or Madam | Yours faithfully / Faithfully yours |

### American English

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Salutation | Greeting |
| Dear Ms. Wexley: Dear Jane Wexley: Dear Jane: | Sincerely, / Sincerely yours, |
| Gentlemen: Ladies: Ladies and Gentlemen: To whom it may concern: | Sincerely, / Sincerely yours, |

In emails you could also write:

* Regards
* Kind regards
* Best wishes

**Position**: Write the greeting two lines below the last paragraph and left-justify it. If the date is centre-justified, however, do also centre-justify the greeting.

*12) The signature block.(Подпись)* The name of the person signing the letter is written by hand below the space left for the signature, and is followed on the next line by his position in the company or by the name of the department he rep­resents.

Your full typewritten name and designation (on separate lines) should appear beneath your handwritten signature.

It often happens that in a large firm it is obviously impossible for the head of the business to deal with all the correspondence and certain employees are authorized to sigh for the firm; they are then said to sign *per procurationem* *( per pro, p.p, per.)* which is a Latin phrase meaning “ by acting as an agent”. In modern practice *per pro* is frequently omitted and the words Secretary, Sales Manager are usually added.

EX.1

A.Smith and Co., Ltd.

p.p. *D.White*

Export Department

EX. 2

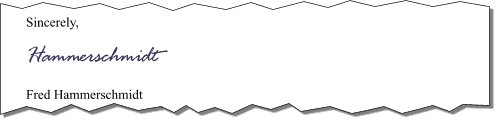
The Hungingtower Co., Ltd.

*W.Stead*

Managing Director

Traditionally the complimentary close and signature have been typed in the middle of the page, but it is becoming more and more common for firms to place them against the left-hand margin.

**Position:** Leave 4 blank lines after the close (space for the signature) and write the sender's name below that space.

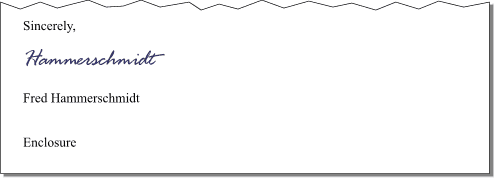


*13)* ***Initials of persons in charge* ( пометка об исполнителях)** Large companies have to keep record of the staff members composing and typing letters. Their initials are typed after the signature. The initials of the persson who composed are capitalised and the operator’s are lower- cased . (строчные буквы) MF:af or MF/ af

***14) Enclosures.(Приложения)*** If an enclosure accompanies the letter, this fact is indicated both in the text itself and by the word Enclosure (often reduced to Enc. or Encl.) typed against the left-hand margin some distance below the signature.

# Enclosure in a Business Letter

If you wish to enclose documents, you can either list all enclosed documents separately or just write the word 'Enclosure' below the signature.



***15) Copies(Копии)***If you need to send the letter to more than one person make an indication with the abbreviation **c.c.**

c.c.: Dr. Thomas Brake

***16)PostScript P.S.(Постскриптум)***Gives any additional information