

PURPOSE

In certain circumstances, it is important to put your thoughts into writing.

FORMAT

Elements:

The elements found in typical business letters are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. full mailing address of the sender | f. body (the main message) |
| b. date on which letter is written | g. complimentary closing |
| c. address of person to whom letter is addressed | h. signature line (be sure to sign your letter) |
| d. subject line | i. enclosure and copy notations |
| e. salutation | |

Model Letter:

The model below uses all the elements from the list. The overall layout is a matter of personal choice, as is the decision to include a phone number and email address. The text of the model letter is exceptionally brief. Most appeal and request letters require a page or two.

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- a. Peter Anteater
123 ABC Street
Irvine, CA 92616 Email address, fax and/or phone number
- b. November 20, 20XX
- c. Dismissal Appeals Committee
UCI School of Social Ecology
Office of Student Services, 102 Social Ecology I
Irvine, CA 92697-7055
- d. Subject: Request for Appeal of Dismissal
- e. Dear Committee,
- f. I am writing to request an appeal of the dismissal decision. There were several factors that contributed to my academic progress. Important questions to address:
- What circumstances/life situations affected your studies (e.g. family or life hardships, health, disability, etc.)?
 - How did this impact your academic performance (studying, going to class, test-taking, time management, hours spent on school work, etc.)?
 - What changes did you make this past quarter?
 - How did these changes impact your academic performance?
 - What grades do you think you need in your courses to get into good academic standing?
 - What resources might help?

- What barriers prevent you from being in good standing?
- How can you negotiate these barriers?
- Is this reasonable at this time?

g. Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. Please contact me by Email or phone if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your signature
Peter Anteater

- h. ID# 045678900
- i. encl. (use to note any additional documentation you provided)
cc: (List anyone you copied on the letter)

CONTENT AND TONE

While the appearance of a letter is important, the content and tone will determine whether the letter really does its job. Review any relevant policy and pay particular attention to what the decision maker needs to know to consider an appeal or request. That is the information which should be included in your letter.

Opening Statement

The first sentence or two should state the purpose of the letter clearly.

I am writing to appeal my current dismissal status...

I am writing to request a review of a recent decision...

I am writing to appeal my current disciplinary status, and to apologize for my involvement in the floor crawl which led to my being placed on notice. I realize that what seemed harmless fun to me was actually a danger to my health and the health of others. I sincerely regret my actions that night....

Be Factual

Include factual detail but avoid dramatizing the situation.

In late October I was diagnosed with tonsillitis. I was sick for over a week, and missed most of my mid-term exams.

NOT *"In late October after feeling really sick for a few days I finally dragged myself to Student Health...."*

Be Specific

If an appeal or request depends on particular facts which the decision maker will want to verify, be specific.

I missed a test January 23, because I flew to San Francisco on October 19 for my grandfather's funeral and returned only October 24. I enclose the airline receipt and can provide further corroboration if that would be helpful.

NOT *"I had to attend a funeral out of town so I missed the test on January 23."*

Documentation

Include any documentation required by policy or needed to substantiate your claims. If documentation is being sent by a third party, state that with details.

I have included verification of attendance at LARC workshops (or previously turned in copies of attendance at LARC workshops)...

Dr. A., my father's physician, has agreed to write to you about this matter....

Stick to the Point

Don't clutter your letter with information or requests that have no essential connection to the main message.

Do Not Try to Manipulate the Reader

Threatening, cajoling, begging, pleading, flattery and making extravagant promises are manipulative and usually ineffective methods.

If you give me a chance to continue my studies, I promise to work really hard, get rich, and donate a million dollars to the University....

How to Talk About Feelings

It is tempting to overstate the case when something is important to us. When feelings are a legitimate part of a message, own the feeling, and state it as a fact.

When I saw my grade, I was very disappointed.

Be Brief

It is more work to write a good short letter than a long one. Busy decision makers appreciate the extra effort.

Avoid Errors

A letter will make a better impression if it is typed; free of spelling and grammar mistakes; free of slang; and placed in the right sized envelope. BUT it is much more important to meet deadlines and state the purpose clearly than to submit a letter which is completely error-free.

Keep Copies

Until a matter is settled, keep copies of all letters sent or received, as well as relevant documents and forms.