

**HANDBOOK FOR
BUSINESS
LETTER WRITERS**

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Handbook for Business Letter Writers by Louise Emily Bonney & Carolyn Percy Cole

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LOUISE EMILY BONNEY & CAROLYN PERCY COLE

HANDBOOK FOR BUSINESS LETTER WRITERS

**HANDBOOK FOR
BUSINESS LETTER WRITERS**

BY

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INSTRUCTORS IN ENGLISH

WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL, NEW YORK



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INTRODUCTION

What good eyeglasses are to the eyes, good English is to the mind. As good eyeglasses enable the eyes really to see the printed page that lies before them, so good English enables the mind to understand easily and clearly the thought that page is intended to express.

Success in a competitive business is the outcome not only of ambition and hard work but of full and painstaking preparation. One should learn the meaning of words. One should develop the ability to write English that will exactly express his thoughts. Many a good business plan has failed of adoption because of misunderstandings that arose from the awkward and obscure language in which it was written. I have learned this through bitter experience.

It is worth while to give oneself a real chance to succeed by getting a thorough preparation for business. Without this preparation, one's letters and business plans are likely to confuse even those who understood the subject in the beginning. With this preparation, one can bring the entire power of his mind to bear in presenting his ideas to his business associates. This book will teach young people to handle intelligently those essential tools of business, words and sentences. Therefore, I am interested in it and recommend it.

EDWARD A. FILENE

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HANDBOOK FOR BUSINESS LETTER WRITERS

WHY BOTHER?

"Why bother over all those tiny details? Why be so fussy?"

Well, why?

Why not use an inch margin all the time? Why bother with a two-inch one? Why try to keep the right-hand margin even? Why "block" a letter consistently? Why write out words that might be abbreviated? Why list items? Why trouble to look up the spelling or the meaning of a word in the dictionary, when your reader will probably guess what you mean, anyway? Why bother?

It is worth while "bothering" to make a friend, isn't it? That is what letters do, make friends or enemies; or what is worse, they result in deadly indifference.

The letter that makes a friend is attractive in appearance, clean, framed in a white margin, consistently planned. It is simple and clear in its meaning, just as the speech of a friend is simple and easy to understand, with no hidden thoughts, no statements with double meanings, no formal phrases that repel. Such a letter is as friendly as its author, genuinely desiring to help the one who receives it. So the "I" is left out of its vocabulary, just as it is out of that of the popular girl. "You" is the one of whom the writer thinks.

This letter gives pleasure to the man who dictates its clear-cut, friendly words; to the girl who transcribes it correctly and intelligently, typing it with the care that an artist uses; and to the person who enjoys reading it from the "Dear Sir" to the "Very truly yours."

FORM OF THE LETTER

APPEARANCE OF THE LETTER

Paper. Practically all business letters are written on commercial size paper, 8½ x 11 inches. The best houses use a good quality of white bond paper. In correspondence within an organization colored papers are sometimes used to represent different departments.

Arrangement on the Paper. The arrangement of the letter on the paper is most important. The stenographer should always plan the "layout" of her letter as carefully as an advertising man does his copy, with the idea of creating a good first impression. Her letters should be "well-framed" in white space, with a one-inch margin for long letters, a two-inch or wider margin, for short letters. Her right-hand margin should be almost as clearly-cut as her left.

Ordinarily the letter should be single spaced, with double spacing between date and salutation, between salutation and body, between the paragraphs themselves, and between the body and conclusion. In very short letters, double spacing may be used throughout. Paragraphs may be indented or blocked, as the stenographer's taste or as the policy of the house dictates. It is correct to indent paragraphs even if the block form is used elsewhere.

The conclusion should be centered.

One page letters are preferred to longer ones, unless the letter is from a close associate and written on a subject in which the recipient has a keen interest. Usually all pages after the first one are written on sheets with no letterhead.