# Literacy Entry Level 3 – Informal Letter Writing

1 of 18 – Welcome

Welcome to this session on informal letter writing. In this session we will look at what an informal letter is, including the different types of language we might use to write them, and who we might send them to.

By the end of this session, you will:

* Know what informal letters are
* Know when informal letters are used
* Understand the type of language used for informal letters

2 of 18 – Why do we write letters?

Even though writing and sending letters can take much more time than other types of communication, such as texting and emailing for example, writing letters is something that many people still do quite often.

It can be exciting to get something in the post, especially if it is a formal letter – notifying you that you have passed an exam – or an informal letter – from a friend who is travelling, for example.

Each letter carries with it something that might be personal or even important, and it can be nice to have a written record of these things that you can keep a physical hold of (without needing an internet connection or a mobile device to read back over things).

3 of 18 – Two types of letters

Letters are usually informal or formal in terms of how they are written, how they are structured, and who they are being sent to. For example, a formal letter is something that you will likely send to someone that you do not know personally. Formal letters often use very serious language – rather than relaxed or chatty language – and they are often written with a specific idea in mind.

For example, you might write a formal letter to a company if you wanted to praise their service – or if you wanted to complain about it!

Informal letters are used in a very different way to this though.

4 of 18 – An introduction to informal letters

Informal letters are usually sent to someone that you know personally or have met in real life – meaning friends, family members, or maybe even a pen pal (a pen pal is someone who you keep in touch with through sending letters, and they are often someone who lives far away).

Informal letters might be normal letters – i.e. they are paragraphed and run from the top of a page down to the bottom – but they can take other forms too, such as postcards for example.

They use relaxed, chatty, and familiar language, as these letters will always be sent to someone that you know, and who knows you, very well.

Informal letters are often used to share information about your day-to-day life. You might write about what you have done on your most recent holiday, for example, or what you have been doing at work or college recently.

5 of 18 – What do informal letters need?

Even though informal letters are quite relaxed in their language, there are still one or two rules that need to be followed when writing both informal and formal letters to people.

You must always put your address in the top right-hand corner of the page, even if the person you are writing to will know who the letter is from without this. This is one of the most important rules for letter-writing.

Once you have put the address in the top right-hand corner, you should then put the date you wrote the letter directly underneath this.

The language of an informal letter might be more relaxed and chattier, but it is still important that you start your letter in a nice way – ‘Dear Raj’ – and finish it clearly too. We will talk about this more a little later on.

6 of 18 – What language do informal letters use?

You know already by now that informal letters are a little more relaxed and chattier with their language, but what does this actually mean?

Well, a formal letter will often have a very serious tone meaning that when you are writing a formal letter you will use proper terms and formal language:

“I am writing to inform you about a problem with…”

An informal letter will not have this same tone. Instead of being formal and strict with your language, you will use more a conversational tone – like you would if you were explaining something face-to-face – and use more relaxed phrases:

“I thought I’d write to tell you about…”

7 of 18 – What language do informal letters use? - continued

People will usually describe things differently in informal letters, and these small changes will make a big difference to a formal or informal tone.

A formal letter might read: “I do hope that you will rectify this issue”. While an informal letter might say “I hope they’ll fix the problem soon.”

It is the small differences – between words like rectify and fix, which actually mean exactly the same thing as each other – that make a big difference between your completed letters overall.

8 of 18 – Informal but clear

Even though informal letters – and informal language – have a more chatty and relaxed tone to them, we still need to be clear about what we are trying to say to make sure that everything we write makes sense.

To make sure that you are as clear as possible when you are writing your informal letter, it might be a good idea to plan it first.

You do not have to write out everything that you want to say in huge amounts of detail. However, you could set aside a minute or two to consider the things that you want to put in your letter, and the order that you want to write them in.

This means that your writing will be clear and well ordered, so the person receiving your letter can understand everything that you are telling them.

9 of 18 – Using questions in informal letters

Something else that you might find and use in informal letters are questions. You could add these in around your own news.

For example, if you are telling someone about your recent holiday, you might ask “Do you have any holidays planned for this year?”.

Questions perform many different jobs in an informal letter. They act as good breaks in between your own news, they show you are interested in the other person, and they also give the person you are writing to a good starting point for when they are writing back – meaning, they might start their letter by answering some of the questions that you have asked them in yours.

10 of 18 – Starting and finishing informal letters

Whether your letter is informal or formal you will usually start it with: ‘Dear…’

For informal letters you will probably follow this with the person’s first name: ‘Dear Eddie’, rather than their title and their surname ‘Dear Mr. Tambe’ which you would use for a formal letter.

There are many different ways in which you can finish, or sign off, your informal letter. Given that you know the person – and maybe see them a close friend – you can sign off in quite a friendly way too, using words like: From, Yours or Love.

11 of 18 – Question 1

Who might you send an informal letter to?

Choose all that apply:

1. A newspaper editor
2. A family member
3. An organisation
4. A company
5. A pen pal
6. A friend

The correct answers are B, E and F, a family member, a pen pal and a friend.

12 of 18 – Question 2

Read the statements below and see if you can decide which ones are true and which ones are false.

In an informal letter your address should appear on the top left-hand side of the page.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

In an informal letter the date of the letter should appear beneath your address, in the top right-hand side of the page.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

In an informal letter you do not need to use ‘Dear’ at the beginning, just start with the person’s name.

True

False

The correct answer is: False

In an informal letter your signoff can be more friendly, for example Yours, From, or Love.

True

False

The correct answer is: True

13 of 18 – Question 3

Which of the following are good examples of informal language for an informal letter?

Choose all that apply:

1. I thought I’d write to tell you about
2. I don’t know how they’ll fix it all
3. I was absolutely fuming about it
4. I hope you can rectify this problem
5. I am writing to inform you of

The correct answers are A, B and C, I thought I’d write to tell you about, I don’t know how they’ll fix it all, and I was absolutely fuming about it.

14 of 18 – Postcards

Postcards are small cards that you usually find in tourist shops while you are on holiday somewhere. They have a picture of some kind on the front – which is usually a funny cartoon, or a maybe even a photograph of the place that you are visiting – and there is space to write a short message on the back.

Even though it looks different to a normal letter’s structure, a postcard still follows some of the same rules. For example, you still have space in which to write the address, and that space is still the top right-hand corner of the card; you can also include the date that you sent the postcard here, too.

Postcards are one example of informal letter writing, but with a very strict word count – as you do not have much space to fit everything in.

Postcards are a good example of where we need clear language and clear writing, even when we are being informal.

15 of 18 – Postcards – details and questions

Postcards are a good example of when you need to give important details but also when you need to ask some questions too.

You might start a postcard by telling your friend or relative how you are, or whether you are enjoying your holiday: “I’m having a lovely time in Bournemouth.”

This will give you the chance to ask them how they are doing – “How are you?” – and perhaps even what they have been up to – “Have I missed anything while I’ve been away?”.

Postcards are a good way to practice writing your informal letters because they only allow a small amount of space to write in. This means that you have to think very carefully about what you want to tell your friend, and how you are going to explain it to them as clearly as you can.

16 of 18 – Question 4

Using the following choice of words; **tone**, **chatty**, **interested in them**, **starting point**, **provide a break**, **structure**, **questions** and **a friend**, fill in the blanks for the paragraph below:

When you are writing an informal letter to **blank** or family member, you might like to ask them **blank**. These can be important for a number of different reasons. Firstly, they show the other person that you are **blank** and what they have been doing. They also **blank** from your own news, so they can be useful to the **blank** of your letter too. Finally, they give the other person a **blank** for when they write their letter back to you. Alongside these questions, it is important that you use **blank** and relaxed language too, to set the right **blank** for your letter.

The correct paragraph should read:

When you are writing an informal letter to **a friend** or family member, you might like to ask them **questions**. These can be important for a number of different reasons. Firstly, they show the other person that you are **interested in them** and what they have been doing. They also **provide a break** from your own news, so they can be useful to the **structure** of your letter too. Finally, they give the other person a **starting point** for when they write their letter back to you. Alongside these questions, it is important that you use **chatty** and relaxed language too, to set the right **tone** for your letter.

17 of 18 – Question 5

What **three** things does an informal letter need?

Choose the three that apply:

1. The date of the letter written above your address
2. “Dear” at the start and a friendly signoff at the end
3. The date of the letter just beneath your address
4. Your address in the top right-hand corner
5. Your address in the top left-hand corner

The correct answers are B, C and D, “Dear” at the start and a friendly signoff at the end, the date of the letter just beneath your address, and your address in the top right-hand corner.

18 of 18 – End

Well done! You have completed this session on informal letter writing.

In this session you have looked at:

* What informal letters are
* When informal letters are used
* The type of language used for informal letters

If you have any questions about any of the topics covered, make a note and speak to your tutor for more help.