

STUDENT TOOLS FOR WEBQUESTS

How to write a request letter

As the name implies, request letters are usually sent to ask someone for information, goods, or services. Like all business letters, the request letter should include the following elements:

1. Date
2. Name and address of person you are writing to
3. Subject line (what is the purpose of your letter?)
4. Salutation (i.e. "Dear Mr. Smith:")
5. Body of letter (your message)
6. Complimentary closing (i.e. "Thank you for considering my request.")
7. Signature line (remember to sign your letter!)
8. Your name and contact information (not required if given in letterhead)
9. List of enclosures (if any)

(List adapted from <http://www2.ucsc.edu/ombudsman/letter.htm>)

Here is an example request letter:

May 29, 2001

Mr. John Smith
President
ABC Skincare Ltd.
123 Yale Road
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 7H8

Subject: Request for Sunscreen Samples

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a student at Central High and I am currently conducting a research project on the effects of the sun on skin cells. As Ontario's major producer of skincare products, I was wondering if you could send me a small sample of your ABC Suntastic Sunscreen product for use in my research project. I have attached a project outline for my research for your information.

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any samples available, please mail them to me at the address below.

Sincerely,

Sally Jones

Sally Jones
Student, Central High
123 School Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 3J9

Enclosure: 1

In a request letter sent to a person or organization, you should try to state your request in the first sentence. You should explain who you are and why you are writing to him/her/them in the first place.

In the body of the letter you should:

- explain exactly what you are asking them to do
- include background information or web links for them to retrieve more information
- briefly describe the project you are working on
- give your school's address and telephone number for future contact; do not use your personal address or telephone number
- be sure to thank them for considering your request

When writing a request letter, you may also wish to consider the following tips (<http://www.writinghelp-central.com/>):

- Keep the letter short and to the point. Letters should be concise, factual, and focused. Try to never exceed one page or you will be in risk of losing your reader. A typical letter page will hold 350 to 450 words.
- Focus on the recipient's needs. While writing the letter, focus on the information requirements of your audience, the intended addressee. Imagine the intended recipient seated across a desk while you are explaining the subject of the letter. What essential information does that person need to know through this communication?
- Summarize your request in the first or second sentence.
- Use simple and appropriate language. Your letter should use simple, straightforward language for clarity and precision. Use short sentences and don't let your paragraphs exceed three or four sentences.
- Re-read and revise the letter. Do a first draft of the letter and then carefully review and revise it. Put yourself in the place of the addressee. Imagine yourself receiving the letter. How would you react to it? Would it answer all of your questions? Does it deal with all of the key issues? Are the language and tone appropriate? Sometimes reading your letter out loud can be helpful.
- Check spelling and grammar. A letter is a direct reflection of the person sending it, and by extension, the organization that person works for. When the final content of the letter is settled, make sure that you run it through a spelling and grammar checker. Sending a letter with obvious spelling and grammar mistakes looks sloppy and unprofessional. You may also want to ask a friend to proofread your letter.

Once you receive a response or fulfillment of your request, be sure to send a thank-you letter to your contact person.