Format

A standard letter is written in 12-point Times New Roman font with single-spaced text and one-inch margins on all sides. The body of the business letter can be formatted similarly to a business memorandum or report, with body sections and headers that summarize the main topics. If direct quotes, ideas, or information exclusive to someone else are included in your letter, appropriate documentation within the letter is required.

Components:

Sender Address/Company Header

Date

Recipient’s Address

Appropriate Greeting—“Dear Mr./Ms./Dr./Professor Smith,” for example

Introduction—Identifies the subject of the letter, its primary objectives, and a summary of the letter’s findings/recommendations. The introduction does not include a header.

Body—Clearly states the problem/issue at hand, elaborates major points, and provides analysis of various alternatives. The body should contain distinct paragraphs for each point. To assist the reader, each body section can have an appropriate heading that summarizes the section’s main topic. Headers can underlined. For example: Recommendations.

Visual aids such as charts, tables, or graphs may be referenced in your body text, but the actual aids should be included at the end of the letter as attachments.

Recommendation(s)—Proposes actions or makes recommendations based on analysis provided in the body of the letter.

Conclusion—Provides final thoughts for the reader; extremely brief. The recommendation and conclusion sections do not require headers, and may be combined for efficiency.

Closing—Appropriate closing text (Sincerely, Regards, Best, etc.), then your typed name two spaces below. You should sign your name in the middle space between the closing and your typed name. Also, include contact information (email address and/or phone number).

Visual Aids for Letters

Visual aids can include tables, graphs, exhibits, appendices. All visual aids should have a professional appearance; using a high-quality printer for final drafts is highly recommended. Too much text or graphics can clutter your visuals, so be sure to provide a balance of information and open space.

As previously mentioned, you can refer to your visual aid in the letter, but the actual item should be an attachment after the last page of the letter.

** This student’s guide is used exclusively by the College of Business at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. For additional communication-related resources, see http://go.business.illinois.edu/CommunicationHelp.

1 Student’s Guide to Memo Writing: http://go.business.illinois.edu/CommunicationHelp