

# Writing Negative Messages

Bowker Comm 390

# Bad News Messages

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## Best Practices

1. use positive language
2. use a respectful tone
3. take the concerns seriously
4. keep focused on your audience – make them feel heard and respected
5. don't mislead or offer something you can't deliver
6. provide an explanation, but don't go in to unnecessary detail
7. revise revise, be careful



# Be clear

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- ▶ Use short sentences
  - ▶ to minimize misunderstandings.



May 2013

Solid Walnut ball, newel post finial unfinished. I will make however many that are ordered. This ball finial is approx. 5 3/8" in diameter and about 2 pounds in weight. The picture is a 7 inch cherry ball. It has a small flat bottom. You can buy it smooth or with rings. You can buy it in walnut, oak, maple, cherry or mahogany. If this isn't the kind of newel post finial you are looking for you can send me your email address and I can send pictures and descriptions of the 71 finials I can list.



# Cover all the necessary information

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Dear Professor Bowker,

Attached to this email is the first part of the business plan project. My group is in section 110. The people in my group are Courtney Davies, Billy Kato, Wendy Shao and myself, Abigail Tan.

Sincerely,

Abigail Tan



**SAUDER**  
School of Business

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



# Keep focused on your audience

November 2012

Dear car2go Canada Members,

As the demand for car2go increases in your city, we are continually looking for ways to also increase the availability of cars for you, when you need them and where you need them. Within the past year, we have added new cars, optimized the car2go Home Area, added more parking options, and later this month, you will see an additional change.

Starting November 12, we will eliminate the long term reservation feature. The average trip in a car2go is 30 minutes or less, and the majority of trips begin either on-demand or with a short-term reservation. This change will allow you to find more cars available for immediate use.

Short Term Reservations (up to 15 minutes) will still be available via smart phone and our website, allowing you ample time to access a car at no charge.

We hope that you will appreciate the increased flexibility, as this adjustment will allow us to uphold one of the core principles of our service – allowing our members to find a car and go.

Happy Driving!

Your car2go Canada Team



# Use a respectful tone

Samantha,

I hope this finds you well and carrying on through the craziness of the election.

I was just speaking to Manfred Chalmer who was the Director of Abstract Services at VANOC, and is now the Vice-President at the Vancouver Board of Something Important, working in the Lex Building around the corner from you. He has informed me that regrettably they won't be issuing that Call for Proposals after all. I know your team was looking forward to the opportunity and I'm sorry this one didn't work out.

I'm still consulting, benefiting from having taken your advice with respect to trade associations including the CME, but have just also accepted a position as a full time lecturer at Sauder.

Best,  
Elizabeth



# Take concerns seriously

Yep Rock sent a shipment of vinyl records that were poorly packed:

From: Customer Service [mailto:customerservice@redeyeusa.com]

Sent: August-11-13 12:34 PM

To: David Hatchman

Subject: Re:



Hi David,

Wow. That is atrocious. Definitely let me know if any of the items received are damaged and I will arrange for an immediate reship. And thank you for sending the photo along. I will make sure to pass this along to our warehouse staff, and see what I can do about getting "Fragile" stickers to be put on future shipments. Thanks!

# Provide an explanation

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- Without going in to too much detail.



Date: June 29, 2007

Re: Account: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Our records indicate that over the past year, we have received frequent calls from you regarding your billing or other general account information. While we have worked to resolve your issues and questions to the best of our ability, the number of inquiries you have made to us during this time has led us to determine that we are unable to meet your current wireless needs.

Therefore, after careful consideration, the decision has been made to terminate your wireless service agreement effective July 30, 2007. This will allow you to pursue and engage with another wireless carrier.





# Putting it all together



Joan,

As I told you in your office just now, I am going to make my opposition to your initiative formal. Of course I respect that this is your decision to make, and other than voicing my opinion, I won't stand in your way. As you know, I'm concerned that this may have significant and lasting backlash against the company, but I'm also aware that if it works, the benefits could be very great and I'll cheer you on should that happen, of course I hope it does. I'll be sending a letter upstairs to Trish and to Legal and CC you as well. I want them to know you and I have discussed this.

On a better note, I forgot to mention that Sandeep is working out really well, thanks for sending him our way.

Best,

Elizabeth

# Readings

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- ▶ Chapter 6, p. 153 or 133:

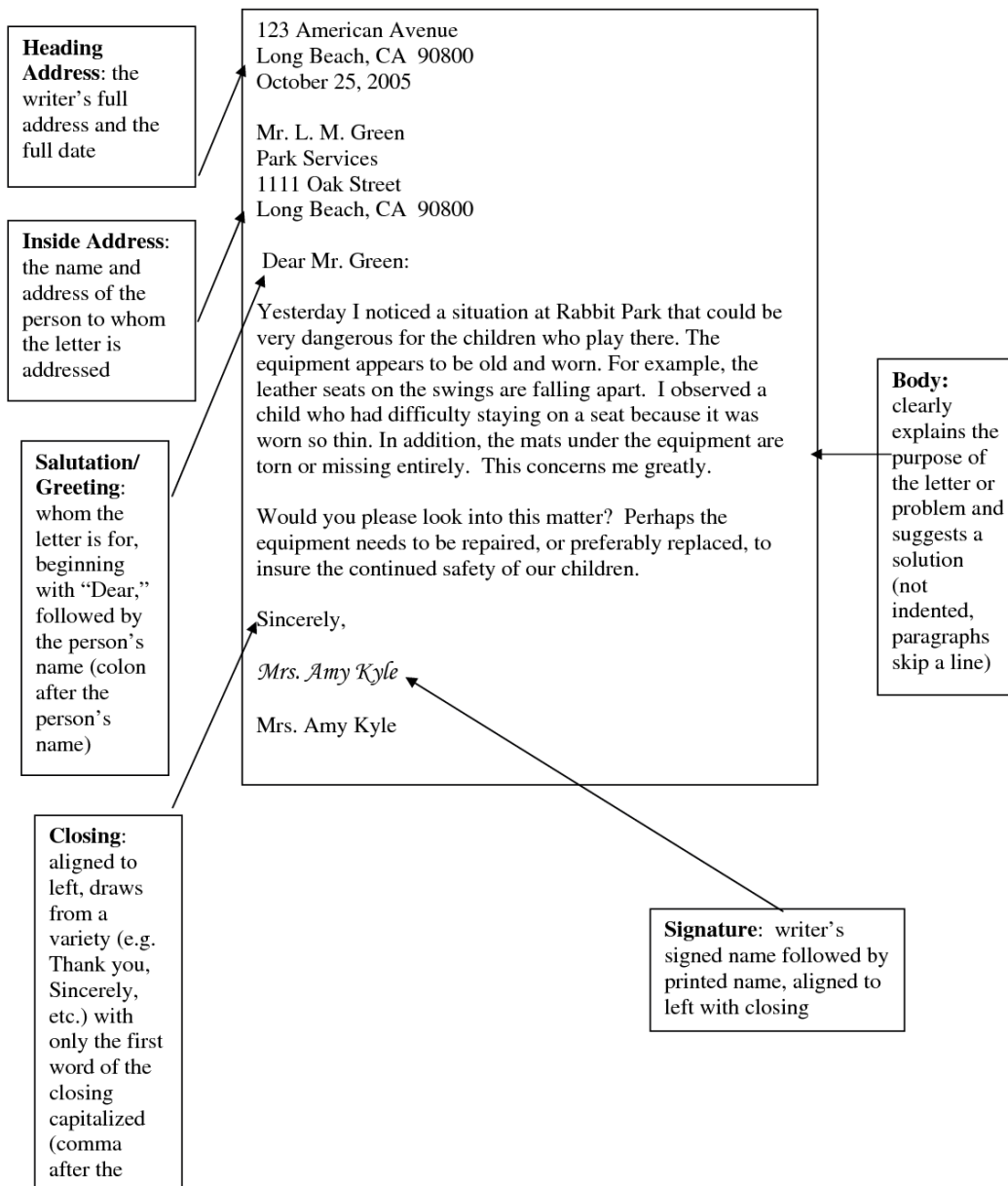
## **Writing Bad News Messages**



## Formal Business Letter Format

(Sample Letter of Complaint)

Revised 3/07



# Formal Letters

- ▶ When is it appropriate to send a formal letter?

# Writing Practice

- ▶ You've made a commitment to teach a seminar the weekend of November 28, but you've got too much to do and won't be able to make it. Should you write a letter apologizing for backing out?

# Writing Practice

- ▶ You've spent a long time developing a relationship and negotiating a contract for the purchase of services for the company you work for.
- ▶ Your boss has signed a *Letter of Intent* to work with this company, but in the end he has decided he doesn't want to proceed with the project.
- ▶ This is awkward because you've built a good relationship with a company you might want to work for in the future.
- ▶ You've been instructed to write a letter telling them there will be no deal. Your boss has told you to figure out what to tell them.



# Response:

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Dear Mrs. Smith

Thank you for working with us in trying to develop an innovative solution to our problem. We are not currently in the position to proceed with the project any further. Your effort so far has been greatly appreciated and we look forward to the possibility of working with you in the future. The product you are offering is very appealing and our decision is in no way related to your team's performance. I hope we are able to continue our relationship and collaborate on projects in the future.

Sincerely,

Thomas Hubball

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End

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