

# Writing formal letters



## Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
BASIC STRUCTURE OF A BUSINESS LETTER.....	1
Sample Business Letter .....	2
USING WORD TEMPLATES TO CREATE A BUSINESS LETTER.....	3
Creating your own template .....	5
FURTHER RESOURCES .....	6
Books.....	6
Internet Resources .....	6



## Introduction

This is a basic guide to writing formal or business letters using Microsoft Word. The basic structure of formal letters is the same whether you are writing by hand or using a computer, but this guide does assume that you have a basic familiarity with Microsoft Word.

## Basic structure of a business letter


Since the introduction of word processing programmes, which have a wide variety of layout features, rigid layout rules have become more relaxed and you will see a number of different styles of business letter. A sample letter is shown on the next page with the key elements highlighted. Listed below are further notes on the key features.

**Addresses** - The name of the postal town should be in capital letters and the Post Code on the last line. Traditionally your own address goes at the top right and the recipient's address underneath and at the left.

**Date** - It is best to write the date in full (02 June 2004), as simply using numbers varies from country to country, e.g. in the USA the month comes first.

**Reference** - This is not always included. If you are replying, use the reference from the original letter (if there is one) and put it after: "Your Ref". If the reference is from your own business then use "Our Ref".

**Greeting & Signing off** - If possible get the name of the person within the organisation that you are writing to. "Dear Mr Shawcross" ... ends with "Yours sincerely", other greetings and closing that goes with them are listed below.

Most formal	Dear Sir/Madam	Yours faithfully
	Dear Mr/Ms Jones	Yours sincerely
Least formal	Dear Emile	Yours truly <i>or</i> Regards

**Subject or attention line** - This should be in capitals or underlined.

**Main body of a letter** - If you are replying then at the beginning refer to the original letter. Otherwise be as precise as possible. Conclude the letter by highlighting

what it is that you want from the person or company. Be specific, for example: "Please send me a price list for your computers".

### Sample Business Letter

The diagram shows a business letter with the following components and labels:

- Sender's Address:** C. Farnes-Barnes, 42 Valentine Gardens, ABERDEEN, AB55 8ZZ.
- Reference:** Your ref: AB55/pm.
- Date:** 02 June 2004.
- Recipient's name & address:** S. Entwistle, Crimmond Insurance International, High Street, CRIMMOND, CR1 7GB.
- Subject:** CAR POLICY REFERENCE: XYZ1.
- Main Body:** The main text of the letter, starting with "Thank you for forwarding me my car insurance policy..." and ending with "We will be driving in France from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> June 2004."
- Closing:** Yours sincerely,
- Space for your signature:** A box indicating where the sender's signature should be placed.
- Your Name:** Charles Farnes-Barnes.

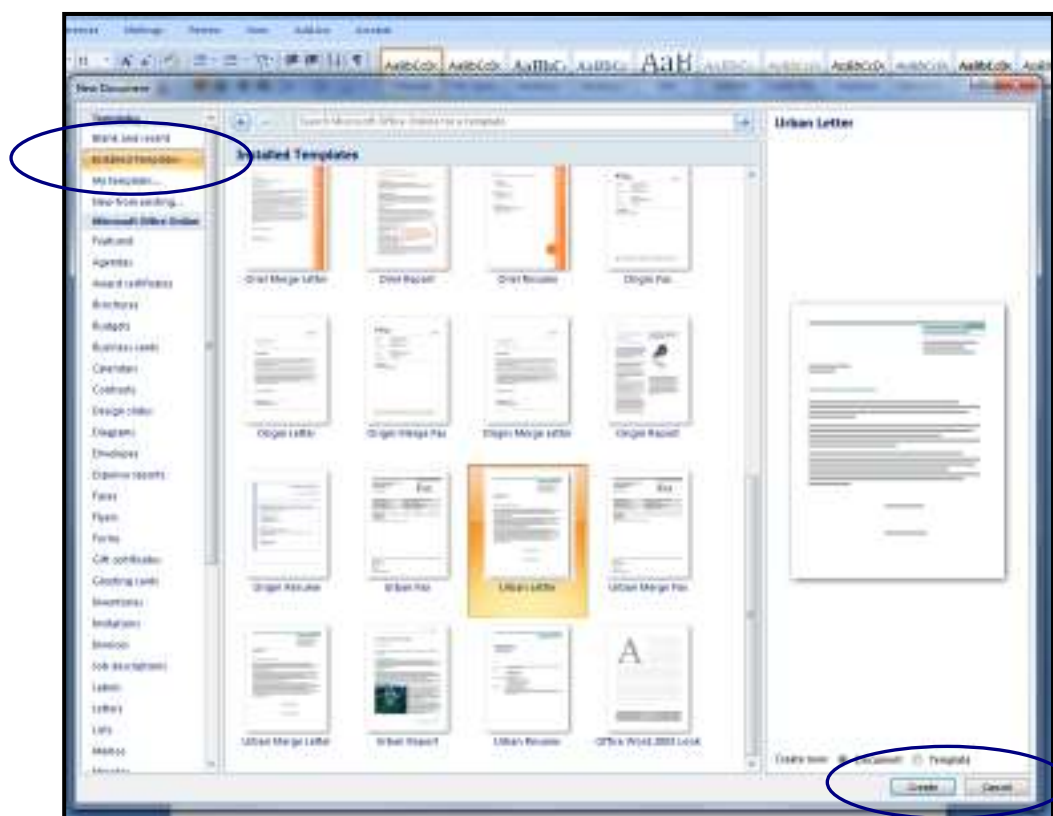
## Using Word Templates to create a business letter

You can just start with a blank page in Word and set out the letter yourself like the one on the previous page. However Word 2007 also has a selection of letter templates where the layout is already done for you.

To use a template, start up WORD, click the Office button in the top left corner and from the drop down menu select **New**, as shown on the right.



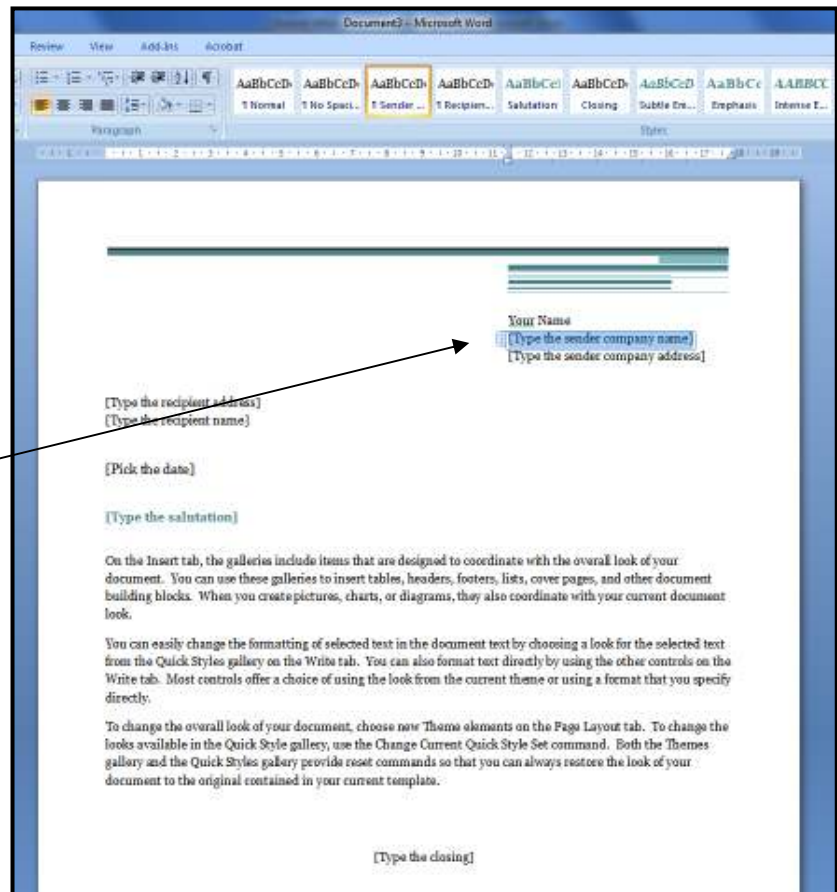
Next choose **Installed templates** from the list on the left and then pick the style of letter you want. The style in the example below is Urban letter. Now click the **Create** button in the bottom right corner.



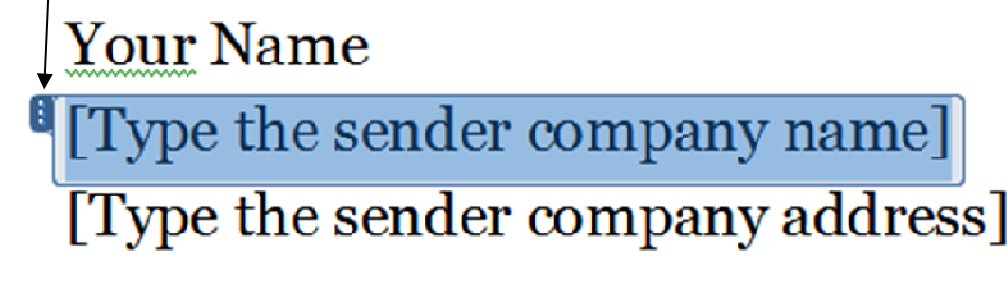
If you don't like any of the installed templates you can choose to search **Microsoft Office Online** by clicking on Letters in the left hand list (provided you are online of course).

Once you have created a document from your chosen template you can replace the text with your own.

Clicking a line or field in the document will highlight it ready for you to type in your own text. As soon as you start typing in a highlighted section the template text will go.



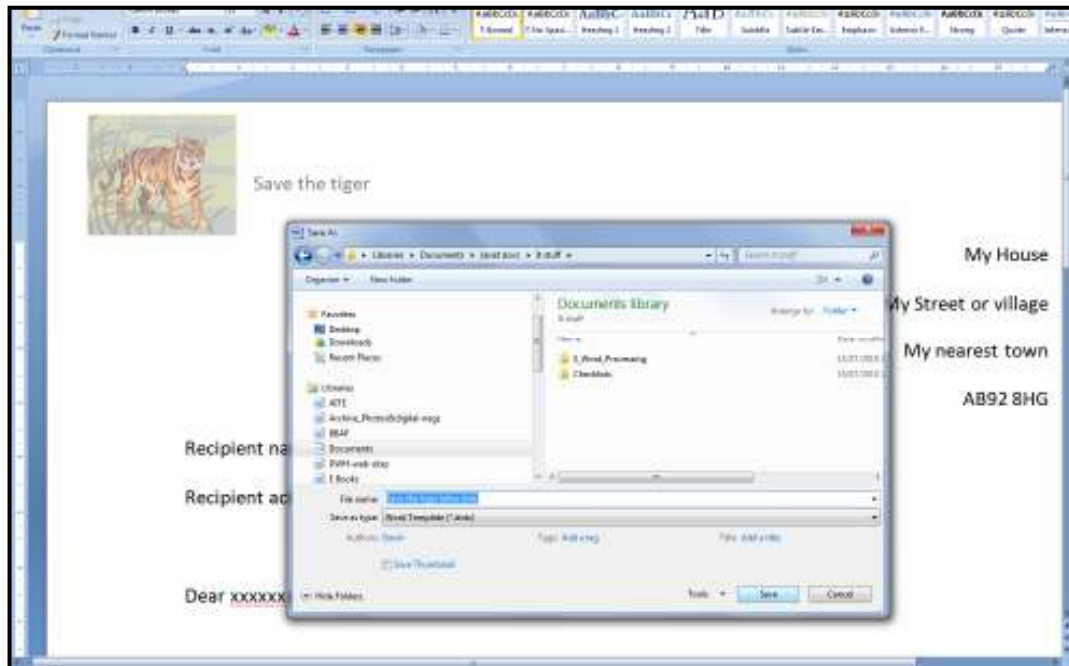
If you want to remove a field altogether, (e.g. the sender company name) click on the handle to the left of the field and then use the delete key on your keyboard.





### Creating your own template

You can also create your own templates. Create a letter as you want it which can include headers and footers or pictures and text you will always want (such as your address). Go to the Office button and choose **Save As** and then choose **Word template**. Choose a location and a name for your template and click **Save**. If you are on a College PC do not save it to Templates.



Next time you want to use the template letter, just open it and it will automatically create a new document based on it but will leave the original template in as it was for use next time.

If you would like help, please ask a member of IT Centre or Library+ staff. The next page list some books and websites that can also help you to write different sorts of letters.

## Further Resources

### Books

Below are some of the books on letter writing held by Aberdeen College Library+.

*Oxford handbook of commercial correspondence*, A Ashley; 2003  
Shelfmark 6851.75 ASH

*Write that letter*, Ian Maitland; 2000  
Shelfmark 651.75 MAI

*How to write letters*, Celia Warren; 2007  
Shelfmark 395.4 WAR

*Writing business letters*, Ann Dobson; 1999  
Shelfmark 651.75 DOB

### Internet Resources

*Ask Oxford.com* (<http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/letterwriting/?view=uk>)  
- This site gives general letter writing advice, plus sample letters and useful phrases.

*UsingEnglish.com* (<http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/letter-writing.html>)  
- This site gives general information and guidelines on letter writing, and also includes the option to send questions to someone on a writing forum.

*Letter Writing Guide* (<http://www.letterwritingguide.com/>)  
- This one page site gives instruction on how to write many different types of letter (both business and social) and includes sample letters.