



# Putting Writing Skills To Work: Writing Business Letters of Request — Grade Ten

## Ohio Standards Connections

### **Writing Process**

#### Benchmark A

Formulate writing ideas, and identify a topic appropriate to the purpose and audience.

(Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 1

Generate writing ideas through discussions with others and from printed material, and keep a list of writing ideas.

(Grade 10)

#### Indicator 4

Determine a purpose and audience and plan strategies (e.g., adapting focus, content structure and point of view) to address purpose and audience.

(Grade 10)

### **Writing Applications**

#### Benchmark C

Produce letters (e.g., business, letters to the editor, job applications) that follow the conventional style appropriate to the text and include appropriate details and exclude extraneous details and inconsistencies.

(Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 3

Write business letters, letters to the editor and job applications that:

- a . address audience needs, stated purpose and context in a clear and efficient manner;
- b . follow the conventional style appropriate to the text using proper technical terms;
- c . include appropriate facts and details;
- d . exclude extraneous details and inconsistencies; and
- e . provide a sense of closure to the writing.

(Grade 10)

### **Lesson Summary:**

*Students will reinforce their knowledge of the format and elements of business letters by writing a request letter. A review of effective letter writing will be provided prior to an independent assignment. This lesson is designed to encourage students to craft letters exhibiting an effective writing style and an awareness of audience and purpose.*

**Estimated Duration:** 90 minutes.

### **Commentary:**

Letter writing is a skill that becomes more finely tuned as students learn effective methods of communication and develop their own writing styles. This lesson is designed for teachers and students to use in a tenth grade class. By this time, most 10th graders are familiar with the standard format and organization of business letters. Often, the challenge for students at this level is in making adjustments in their writing styles to match the demands of the task, audience and purpose.

This point is evidenced in a comment from one of Ohio's teachers who pilot tested this lesson. She said, "For many of my students, this was the first time since first grade they were asked to do something 'perfectly'. They completed multiple drafts on the computer to make it just right before I accepted it as the final copy." An additional comment of interest made by one of the pilot test teachers was, "This assignment addresses the writing application standard as it applies to non-fiction writing." While the focus of this lesson is on writing request letters, it may be adapted to accommodate other purposes for writing.

### **Pre-Assessment:**

Determine students' prior knowledge about writing business letters by asking them to examine a variety of sample business letters. Sample letters may be collected from school or home mail. Working independently or in small groups, students examine and discuss sample letters to identify the following elements: purpose, intended audience, format and organization. Discuss students' observations and record key ideas on an overhead transparency. Through teacher observation of student discussion, establish an appropriate starting point for the lesson.

### **Scoring Guidelines:**

There is no formal scoring for the pre-assessment. If observation reveals that students are unfamiliar with the conventions and style of business letters, begin with a teacher-guided lesson or demonstration on letter writing.

### **Post-Assessment:**

Students write request letters that follow the conventional style appropriate to the writing task, demonstrate an awareness of purpose and audience, include appropriate details and exclude extraneous details and inconsistencies. Students should be encouraged to select their own topics for the request letters. Some ideas



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## Other Related Ohio Standards

### **Writing Process**

#### Benchmark D

Edit to improve sentence fluency, grammar and usage. (Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 15

Proofread writing, edit to improve conventions (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization), identify and correct fragments and run-ons and eliminate inappropriate slang or informal language. (Grade 10)

#### Benchmark E

Apply tools to judge the quality of writing. (Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 16

Apply tools (e.g., rubric, checklist and feedback) to judge the quality of writing. (Grade 10)

### **Writing Conventions**

#### Benchmark A

Use correct spelling conventions. (Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 1

Use correct spelling conventions. (Grade 10)

#### Benchmark B

Use correct punctuation and capitalization. (Grades 8 - 10)

#### Indicator 2

Use correct capitalization and punctuation. (Grade 10)

for this writing task include writing to a favorite athlete, actor or musician requesting autographs and other fan paraphernalia; writing to a local business requesting support for a school-sponsored event or writing to a local company requesting information about employment or internship opportunities for students.

### **Scoring Guidelines:**

The request letter may be scored holistically using the following scale.

4 = Letter includes strong evidence of the following: clear and concise statement of purpose; focus on the topic; awareness of audience; inclusion of appropriate details; exclusion of extraneous details and inconsistencies and use of appropriate style and format for the task. Writing conforms to rules of standard conventions for grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Writing does not contain fragments, run-on sentences or inappropriate uses of language.

3 = Letter lacks consistency and includes some evidence of the following: clear and concise statement of purpose; general focus on the topic; awareness of audience; inclusion of appropriate details; exclusion of extraneous details and inconsistencies and use of appropriate style and format for the task. Writing generally conforms to rules of standard conventions for grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Writing may contain fragments, run-on sentences or inappropriate uses of language, but these errors do not interfere with meaning.

2 = Letter is inconsistent and includes weak evidence of the following: clear and concise statement of purpose; focus on the topic; awareness of audience; inclusion of appropriate details; exclusion of extraneous details and inconsistencies and use of appropriate style and format for the task. Conformity to the rules of standard conventions for grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization is inconsistent and may interfere with meaning. Writing contains fragments, run-on sentences or inappropriate uses of language.

1 = Letter lacks sufficient evidence of the following: clear, concise statement of purpose; focus on the topic; awareness of audience; inclusion of appropriate details; exclusion of extraneous details and inconsistencies and use of appropriate style and format for the task. Writing does not conform to rules of standard conventions for grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Writing contains fragments, run-on sentences or inappropriate uses of language which impede meaning.

0 = Letter not attempted.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. Begin the discussion about business letters by reviewing conventions, including formatting parts of a letter and expectations for grammar and usage. Discuss content and organization of an effective request letter. Generate a list of grade-appropriate expectations for business letters. This list of expectations should provide clear direction for students as they begin drafting their letters.
2. Brainstorm ideas about potential audiences and topics for the request letters and ask students to record ideas of interest in their notes. After students have chosen an idea for their letters, they use the Internet to research information about the addressee to add interest and accuracy to the letter. Students will

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also need to locate contact information.

3. Students complete background research and draft initial letters. Provide time for peer conferencing to support the revising and editing process. Encourage students to use the list of expectations generated in Procedure 1 to guide their discussions.
4. Following peer conferences, students finish the final drafts of their request letters. Final copies of letters should be typed in a correct business letter format using word processing software.

### **Differentiated Instructional Support:**

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Students who struggle with the business letter format may be given a letter template to follow.
- Allow students who struggle with the content and organization of the request letter to work with a partner.
- Students who demonstrate mastery of this indicator may write to community organizations and encourage their support for school-based events and initiatives.

### **Extension:**

E-mail communication has taken the place of traditional business letters in many organizations. Compare the conventions of writing a "business e-mail" to the conventions of a formal business letter. Students may write and send an e-mail version of their final letters.

### **Homework Options and Home Connections:**

- Background research and contact information may be completed at home.
- Students may begin an initial draft at school and complete the letter at home.

### **Interdisciplinary Connections:**

This lesson may be easily connected to a variety of interdisciplinary topics. Students may write letters to request information and artifacts related to a topic of study for another class. For example, a student may request replicas of historical maps as part of a research project in history.

### **Materials/Resources Needed:**

*For the teacher:* Sample business letters, an overhead projector and supplies.

*For the students:* Access to the Internet for research, mailing supplies and reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus).

### **Key Vocabulary:**

- audience
- purpose
- salutation
- closing
- body of letter
- return address



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- inside address
- modified block format
- block format
- date
- signature

### **Attachments:**

- Sample Letter A (Modified block format)
- Sample Letter B (Block Format)