Writing Correspondences

There are many types and formats that we can use to communicate/convey messages. Among these are written forms of communication essential to life today including emails and letters. These forms of communication serve many purposes and can be written in various registers of from business related to personal.

Emails

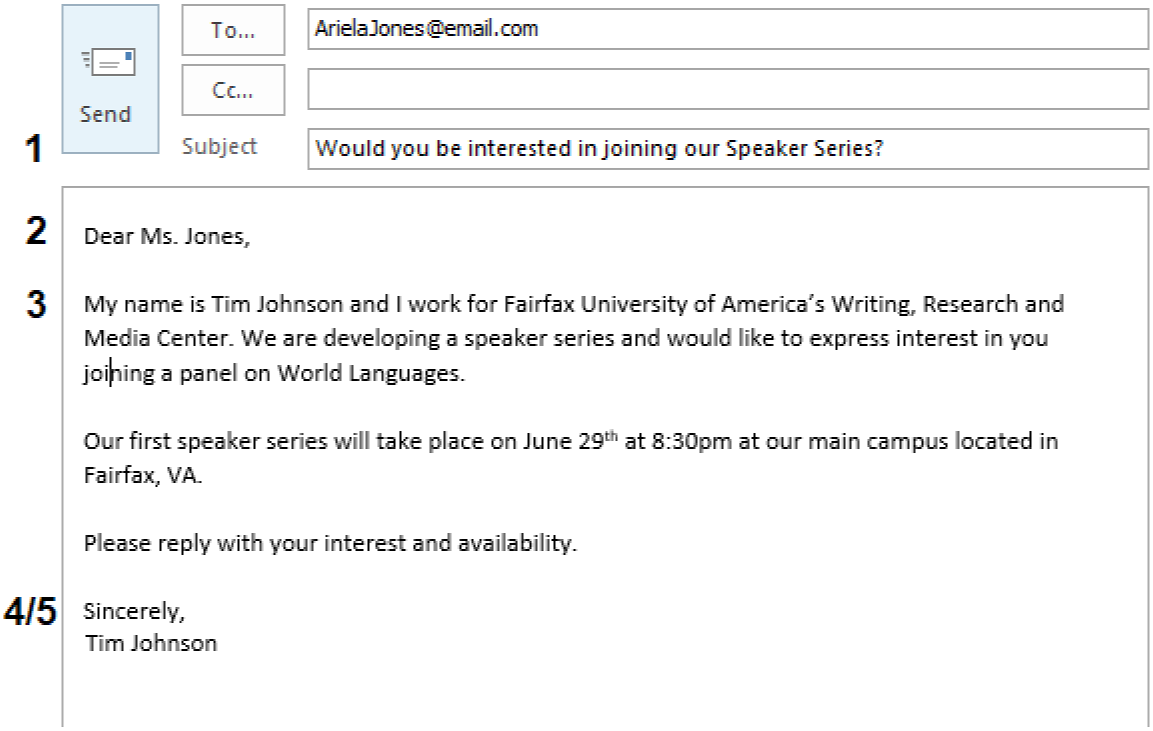
Emails are becoming a very prevalent and rapid form of communication. They are beginning to replace many of the written and mailed forms of correspondences.

All emails carry the same basic formats as written letters and generally include a salutation, message and closing signature.

Be mindful of etiquette when you are sending emails. Email senders should keep in mind that there are still social boundaries to maintain even electronic communications.

Formal Emails

Formal emails are used to correspond with some social equals, persons that you do not know very well or those that you wish to maintain some form of formal relationship.



To... ArielaJones@email.com

Subject: Would you be interested in joining our Speaker Series?

Dear Ms. Jones,

My name is Tim Johnson and I work for Fairfax University of America’s Writing, Research and Media Center. We are developing a speaker series and would like to express interest in you joining a panel on World Languages.

Our first speaker series will take place on June 29th at 8:30pm at our main campus located in Fairfax, VA.

Please reply with your interest and availability.

Sincerely,
Tim Johnson

1. *Use a subject line outlining the main purpose for the email*
2. *The greeting is often more formal containing a Mr., Ms., Professor, Dr., etc. and the recipients last name/family name.*
3. *Get right to the business at hand. State the purpose of the email and then provide a description. The opposite strategy will often result in an email that is overlooked.*

4. *Use a closing signature like “Thank you in advance”, “Sincerely”, “Best”, etc.*
5. *Sign your email with your name*

Personal Emails

As personal emails are often written to people that you know well or on a personal basis. These emails often deviate from the guidelines outlined for formal emails.

The differences between formal and informal emails

1. *They often lack a greeting/salutation and sometimes a signature or replaced with a very informal greeting like “hey”, “hi”, etc.*
2. *They also often lack a signature and sometimes replace the closing with*
3. *Often the informal emails allow for use of emoticons “☺” and abbreviations like “lol”, “ttyl”, etc.*

The similarities between formal and informal emails

1. *They should contain a message with brief amount of content stating the purpose and brief description.*
2. *Use a subject line outlining the main purpose for the email*

Letters

Letters are often used to convey more formal means of communication as emails are often used to convey rapid forms of communication.

Formal Letters

Letters can be used for formal occasions including a letter to a politician, a letter accompanying a resume/CV (“cover letter”), correspondence between businesses, etc. These letters assume a formal relationship between the correspondents and are used to conduct business, seek/give information and establish a working relationship with someone.

The letter contains information like the address of the recipient, the address of the sender, the date, salutation and signature. They are nearly always typed and should be printed on an 8/12 x 11 inch paper.

1. Business Letters
2. Formal Letter Format
3. Formal Letter Template

Personal Letters

Letters can be used for informal occasions including a letter to a friend, acquaintance or relative. These letters generally assume an informal relationship between the correspondents and are used to provide an update on one’s life and/or simply to convey personal information.

The letter at least contains the address of the information like the address of the recipient, the address of the sender, the date, salutation and signature. They can be typed or handwritten. They differ in the formatting of a formal letter in that the sender's contact information/closing are generally found on the right hand side of the document and the recipient's information is drastically reduced.

1. Personal Letter Example
2. Personal Letter Format
3. Personal Letter Template

Other Forms of Correspondence

There are many other forms of communication used in business and personal communication.

Fax Cover Sheets

Faxing documents is another form of electronic communication. It is used to send documents over a phone line. A cover sheet is required to send with a fax as to allow for the contact information of the recipient. Faxes not having a coversheet may be overlooked, tossed away or picked up by the wrong recipient. Having a cover sheet allows for rapid transmission to the intended recipient.

It follows similar formatting to an email including "To", "From", "Subject", "Date" and a message including the content of the fax/attachments. Templates vary and often companies already have fax cover sheets.

1. Fax Cover Sheet Example
2. Fax Cover Sheet Format
3. Fax Cover Sheet Template

Addressing an Envelope

It is important to know how to address an envelope properly as mislabeled envelopes can completely bypass their intended recipient or may be delayed in the receipt by the recipient. The envelope contains both the returning address (the address of the sender) and the forwarding address for the letter (the recipient's information). Don't forget the stamp!

1. Envelope Example
2. Envelope Format
3. Envelope Template