Friendly or Personal Letters

A personalized letter or note makes one stop, read, and appreciate the thoughtfulness behind the message. Personalized letters display a unique voice, taste and style. They show that a lot of thought, even if it is not especially pleasant, went into the written expression. Letter writing has been used for centuries in communicating. Letter writing has held cultures together across oceans, made cultures evolve, recorded history, and in some cases even changed history.

Letter writing is a double-edged sword that can bring people together or destroy relationships and people. That is why it is so important to make sure that what is written on paper comes across just as the writer means it. For you see, reading a letter can not only mend a broken heart, but it can offer a long awaited hello, resolve a disagreement, offer an apology, instigate a reunion, say a thank you, accept an invitation, ask for help, admit blame, and even save a soul.

Therefore, it's important to follow the five C's in letter writing:

1. Clear: Try not to beat around the bush when letter writing. Every word should come across as something that is understood. The best way to test this is to read what you wrote out loud, in a tape recorder, and play it back to yourself. Reading to someone else can also help check clarity.

2. Concise: Do not ramble. Make your words go straight to the point.

3. Courteous: Remember that words can come across a lot harsher on paper. It's best to save arguing to verbal usage, so that you can clear up any misunderstandings. Sarcasm and humor can also be taken the wrong and should be avoided unless your meaning is blatantly clear

4. Correct: Double check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation. There is nothing worse than trying to read a letter full of mistakes. It makes the clarity of the written word harder to decipher and makes the writer look less than intelligent/educated. Penmanship in elementary school was important years ago but in hand-written letters it is still as important. Meticulousness and pride in one's penmanship is a dying art but for written letters it is a requirement—don't make your reader struggle to read your letter. Take your time and make it look nice.

5. Complete: Make sure that when you bring up a topic, you finish what you have to say before you go on to another topic. Keep your ideas together—don't sound scatterbrained.

Do something out of the ordinary and make someone smile today by writing a personalized letter of appreciation to him/her. The memories will be worth the effort, especially if the person is miles away. You will get a great deal of satisfaction from simply taking the time to write a personal message of appreciation. Think about who you are sending it to—what a special gift and welcomed relief to receive in the mailbox amid the usual bills and junk mail.

Words that might appear in a personal letter of appreciation:

Admire	Encouraging	Interesting	Respect	Thrilled
Appreciate	Generous	Marvelous	Satisfy	Touch
Approve	Gracious	Praise	Sensational	Treasure
Commend	Happy	Prize	Superb	Triumph
Delighted	Honor	Recognize	Surprise	Unique
Delightful	Impress	Recommend	Terrific	Valuable
Elegant	Inspirational	Remarkable	Teach	Value
Encourage	Inspire	Remember	Thanks	Welcome

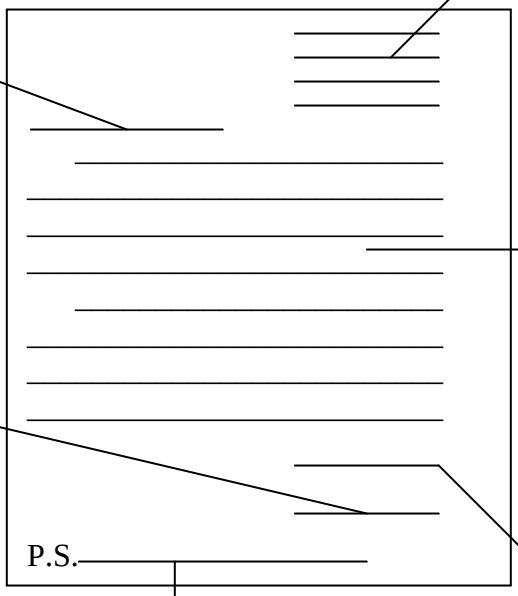
Personal letters, also known as friendly letters or social notes, normally have five parts. They usually follow this format:

1. The Heading: This includes the address, line by line, with the last line being the date. Skip a line after the heading. The heading is indented to the middle of the page. If using preaddressed stationery, add just the date.

2. The Greeting: The greeting always ends with a comma. The greeting may be formal, beginning with the word "dear" and using the person's given name or relationship, or it may be informal if appropriate.

Formal: Dear Uncle Jim, Dear Mr. Wilkins,

Informal: Hi Joe, Greetings, Hey! (Occasionally very personal greetings may end with an exclamation point for emphasis.)



3. The body: Also known as the main text. This includes the message you want to write. Normally in a friendly letter, the beginning of paragraphs is indented. If not indented, be sure to skip a space between paragraphs. Skip a line after the greeting and before the close.

5. The signature line: Type or print your name. The handwritten signature goes above this line and below the close. The signature line and the handwritten signature are indented to the same column as the close. The signature should be written in blue or black ink. If the letter is quite informal, you may omit the printed or typed name as long as you sign the letter.

4. The complimentary close: This short expression is always a few words on a single line. It ends in a comma. It should be indented to the same column as the heading. Skip one to three spaces (two is usual) for the signature line.

*****Postscript:** If your letter contains a postscript, begin it with P.S. and end it with your initials. Skip a line after the signature line to begin the postscript.