

Writing a Letter

Matthew Williams • English Language • April 21, 2026

Purpose

A formal letter is used for official written communication between individuals or organisations.

Letters may:

- **Complain** — raise an issue with a business, authority, or service provider
- **Request** — ask for information, action, or assistance
- **Apply** — submit an application for a job, programme, or opportunity
- **Persuade** — argue a position or advocate for a course of action

Structure

- **Sender's Address** — your full postal address, top left; no name here
- **Date** — written in full below the sender's address
- **Recipient's Address** — recipient's full name (if known), title, organisation, and address
- **Salutation** — Dear [Title] [Surname]: — colon for formal, comma for informal
- **Opening Paragraph** — state the purpose directly; no filler openers
- **Middle Paragraph(s)** — supporting details, evidence, or elaboration
- **Closing Paragraph** — your specific request, next steps, or how to reach you
- **Complimentary Close** — Yours sincerely (name known) / Yours faithfully (name unknown)
- **Signature and Name** — your full name with title in brackets

Key Conventions

- **Do not** open with "I am writing this letter to...", "I hope this finds you well", or "My name is..."
- All text is **left-aligned** in block format — no paragraph indentation
- Use a **colon** after the salutation in formal letters; a comma in personal letters
- **Yours sincerely** when you know the recipient's name; **Yours faithfully** when you do not
- Your name never appears at the top — it goes at the end, after the signature
- **Address format** — Street 'Town 'Kingston (number, if applicable) 'Parish. Only add the country when writing to someone abroad.

DOCUMENT EXAMPLE

14 Mango Walk Half Way Tree Kingston 10 St. Andrew

March 5, 2025

The Manager FreshMart Supermarket 67 Constant Spring Road, Kingston 8

Dear Sir/Madam:

On Tuesday, March 2, 2025, I purchased a carton of twelve eggs from your establishment at 67 Constant Spring Road. Upon returning home, I discovered that six of the eggs were cracked and two were visibly rotten, emitting a foul odour upon opening.

This was not my first experience with a quality issue at your store. In December 2024, I purchased a litre of fresh milk that was sour well before its stated expiry date; I did not report that incident at the time. I have since retained the receipt from my most recent purchase — Transaction Number 0042, dated March 2, 2025 — which I am prepared to submit as evidence.

I respectfully request a full refund for the defective goods and ask that your team review the quality control procedures applied to perishable items. I trust this matter will be treated with the urgency it deserves. I may be contacted at the address above or by telephone at 876-312-4498.

Yours faithfully,

Tanya Brown

Tanya Brown (Ms.)