

**Q. Explain various letter formats or forms of business letters.**

Ans:

A letter that helps the writer to achieve his purpose is said to be an effective letter. An effective business letter can be formatted in one of the following three styles:

- (i) Block Format
- (ii) Modified Block Format
- (iii) Simplified Format

**(i) Block Format:**

In block format, all the letter parts or elements such as date, address, salutation, paragraphs and close, all start from the left hand margin.

In this form of letter the first word of each paragraph need not be indented.

Different parts and paragraphs of the body of the letter are typed in double spacing, while within each part and paragraph single spacing is preferred.

The greatest advantage of this method is that it can be typed quickly and easily.

**(ii) Modified Block Format:**

This is similar to the block format except that date line and closing signature are placed on the right hand side of the page.

**Modified Semi Block Format:**

It is a variation of the modified block format, almost identical to its parent form except that the first line of each paragraph in the main body is indented five spaces.

**(iii) Simplified Format:**

It is a favourite style for the impersonal situations. Generally, it is used for those situations where the identity of the recipient (receiving person) is not known.

In this format salutation and complimentary close are not included, subject line may be included in place of salutation, but in personal situations, the letter writer starts the letter with the name of the recipient.

**Q. Write the structure of a business letter.**

Ans: **Structure of a Business Letter**

A business letter is an official letter dealing with the subjects such as enquiry, order, request, complaint and apology.

An official letter may be formatted in any of the styles (as discussed above). No matter what style is used, all letters must have the following elements.

**(i) Heading: (Return Address or Sender's Address)**

Heading here means the return address or sender's address. The return address should include the company name, street address, city, state, Pin code and telephone number.

But if the letter is written on the company letter head with the company name and address, the return address need not be included.

**(ii) Date:** Date should include the month, day and year with no abbreviations. Date can have any one of the following two formats:

September 24, 2015 (American Style) or

24 September, 2015 (Oxford University Style)

**(iii) Inside Address:**

This is the recipient's address, same as the address that appears on the envelope. This should include the addressee's name, title, the company name, street, city, state and pin code.

**(iv) Subject Line:**

Certain business firms prefer to write subject between inside address and salutation. This is optional. In simplified format, only subject is written, which indicates the topic or purpose of the letter, salutation and complimentary close are omitted.

Subject should be written with a colon and subject line should be underlined.

**(v) Salutation:**

It is used in the block and modified block letter formats only. It names the person or people addressed. It should be placed two spaces below the inside address. In simplified letter format, salutation is replaced by the subject line.

If the recipient of the letter is a man, Dear Sir should be the salutation. Dear Madam, is the salutation for a woman. But if the letter is addressed to a business firm, the greeting is- Dear Sirs.

**(vi) Body or Substance of the letter:**

It forms the main organ of the letter. In official letters, generally, one subject is dealt in one letter. But in business letter's even more than one subject may be taken up. The message that a letter conveys must be divided into short paragraphs.

It should begin two lines below the salutation / subject line.

**(vii) Subscription or Complimentary Closing and Signature:**

Subscription or complimentary closing marks the end of the body of the letter.

It consists of certain courteous words. Use of these courteous words depends upon the tone or nature of the letter i.e. whether it is a formal or informal letter. Some courteous words ranging from least formal to most formal are:

**Sincerely, sincerely yours, cordially, cordially yours, yours sincerely, yours truly, respectively yours, and yours respectively.**

In official letters, the words yours faithfully are written. While writing to a high official, yours obediently may also be used.

**(viii) Superscription:**

It is the address on the envelope. Full postal address of the addressee should be written neatly and properly on the envelope. It is same as inside address.

The sender must sign the lower left hand corner of the envelope, along with his address.

**(ix) Optional Lines:**

Place typist's initials in lower case letters on bottom of the page towards left side. Enclosure or Enc, and C.

**BLOCK FORMAT:** All parts of the letter start from the left margin.

**1. Heading / Return Address / Sender's Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**2. Date**

2 Spaces

**3. Inside Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**4. Salutation**

2 Spaces

**5. Body or Substance**

2 Spaces

**6. Subscription or complimentary Closing**

2 Spaces

7. Enc

2 Spaces

8. c

**MODIFIED BLOCK FORMAT:**

This is similar to the block format except that date line and closing signature are placed on the right hand side of the page.

**1. Heading / Return Address / Sender's Address**

.....

2 Spaces

2 Spaces

**3. Inside Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**4. Salutation**

2 Spaces

**5. Body or Substance**

2 Spaces

2 Spaces

7. Enc

2 Spaces

8. c

**2. Date**

**6. Subscription or complimentary Closing**

**Modified Semi Block Format:**

It is a variation of the modified block format, almost identical to its parent form except that the first line of each paragraph in the main body is indented five spaces.

**1. Heading / Return Address / Sender's Address**

.....

2 Spaces

2 Spaces

**3. Inside Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**4. Salutation**

2 Spaces

**5. Body or Substance**

**(1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph)**

-----  
-----

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)**

-----  
-----  
-----

**2. Date**

2 Spaces

**6. Subscription or  
complimentary Closing**

2 Spaces

**7. Enc**

2 Spaces

**8. c**

**Simplified Format:**

In this format salutation and complimentary close are not included, in place of salutation subject line may be used.

**1. Heading / Return Address / Sender's Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**2. Date**

2 Spaces

**3. Inside Address**

.....

2 Spaces

**4. Subject**

2 Spaces

**5. Body or Substance**

**(1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph)**

-----  
-----  
-----

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph)**

-----  
-----  
-----

2 Spaces

**6. Closing**

2 Spaces

**7. Enc**

2 Spaces

**8. c**