

Introduction

Writing is, in fact, documenting one's thinking. When we write, we put down what we think. It's just like speaking, but done more leisurely. We can take our time. We may first choose a topic, narrow it down to suit our choice and potential. We can look for and find whatever sources and references necessary to prop up, enrich, and authenticate our premises. Once we gather the required data, we may set out for preparing some molds into which we put the data piece by piece. The molds – also known as the blueprints, or more technically speaking, the outlines – are in fact the means of systematically putting our ideas across.

However, even with such already prepared blueprints and data at hand, it often happens that while fleshing the skeleton, we may have to check ourselves for extravagancies, rummage our short and long memories for something nobler, or even adjust some bones here and there. We would have to scribble pages and pages, tear them up again and again, till we can come up with something neat and tidy, right to our point, and satisfactory to our taste.

All such stages and processes, that is, planning for a topic, picking up some data, and concocting the blueprint are just there to help us channel organically whatever has come to our minds. And the different manipulations we do, i.e. jotting down some notes, preparing the first drafts, reading, editing, revising, and refining our later and later copies, will lead us to a quality piece of writing that naturally shouldn't be subject to any criticism. But that is not so.

In each and every corner and turn of this maze, we almost always find cases where there are abysmal gaps between what we think and what we write.

Unless we are capable enough to close up such gaps we will be, no doubt, lost in the middle of the way. We will be at loss because our writing won't make any sense, let alone the sense we wanted it to make. And mind you, this is true of all types of writings: technical, literary, journalistic, etc. Letter writing is, hence, no exception. But how can we be capable enough, competent enough, to bridge our minds over to our pens?

Well, that's not an easy task. Of course, there are the technicalities of writing to help us: grammar, diction, punctuation, unity, capitalization, spelling, coherence, so on and so forth. We can also grow in ourselves an appreciation of the beauty of language in order to make our writing beautiful. Then again, these are not the only writing issues to master. They can help only when the intended meaning or message is accurately outlined and explicitly drawn up. What we need is to have a touch of deep understanding and a taste of effective communicating. These can be achieved, undoubtedly, through one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.

Thus, one should write and practice writing in whatever language he/she desires, native or else. Furthermore, one should always check his mastery of the language he's writing in and try to enrich such mastery through studying and appreciating not only the technicalities of the language proper but also its very beauty.

S. H. Jalali Chimeh

To the Reader

The present book is intended mainly for English undergraduate students who take up either translation, literature, or teacher's training as their majors. It is also meant for other individuals who, for one reason or another, are interested in or in need of writing this or that type of letter. The nature of the book, however, is that of a textbook which, hopefully, can be read alone, or taught and learned in class.

The book is designed in three chapters; namely, Personal Letters, Social Letters, and Business Letters. While more attention is given to social letters, most attention is paid to business letters. The reason is that it is these two types of letters, especially the third type, that would come handy in future life of the student out of the campus. For instance, when it comes to an application letter by a newly graduated student for further studies in so and so university, or an inquiry for some goods by the sales manager of a company the importance of such letters doubles and probably triples. For, any mistake in preparing such letters could suggest either bad impression or financial loss. Hence, more and most emphasis is given to social and business letters. The sample letters, especially the business sample letters, are all prepared and written by the author himself for at least three reasons:

1. To delineate what the author means by style of each specific type of letter.
2. To tap the author's 10 years of experience in preparing and writing business letters, letters of memorandum, basic ordering agreements, contracts, letters of credit; and also the formats for performance bond guaranties, advance payment guaranties, warranties,

3. To respond to the expectations of those graduate students who, attending the author's many letter writing classes, were always restless to know more about letters than those mundane clichéd and stereotyped wordings of old use.

Names of legal and/or real entities throughout the letters the author has written, especially the business ones, are all imaginary. No similarity is intended and no reference should be inferred.

Throughout the three chapters, specifically at the end of each chapter, there are some exercises, which if attended to carefully and patiently, may yield some good results. An appendix is annexed to the book which includes some sample letters – not author's – of those types of letters not routinely in use. Some most commonly used abbreviations and an index are included as well. Also included in the book, though may not be specifically located, is the author's hope that the book can, to some extent, be of some help to all those interested!

S. H. Jalali Chimeh