

Writing 2E Product Study: Assignment #1

Formal Business Letter

Introduction

A well-written inquiry letter is a work of art: it explains who you are, what you want, and persuades the reader(s) to help you in a pleasant, compelling way. Letters are among the most important documents you will ever write as an engineer. In the business world, a good letter can mean the difference between success or failure on a project. Every business letter represents two entities: you, and your business; therefore, write your letters carefully. Letters are an official part of a company's correspondence and can be subpoenaed as legal documents in a court of law.

For this assignment you will contact the manufacturer of your product via business letter to learn more about your device and the people who designed it. This exercise will have two parts. The first exercise (#1) is a letter from you personally to the company. The second letter (#1B) will be a consolidation of your team's best elements into a single letter business from one member of your group (the "contact person"); this person will act as the contact person for your group from now on. The letter generated from Assignment #1B is the letter you will actually send to the company. *Do not mail any letters until I have had time to review them!*

Reading

See Chapter 4 in *A Guide to Writing as an Engineer* regarding the writing of formal business letters. Use a basic business letter style, including a personal letterhead of your own design.

Tasks

- Write a formal, one-page business letter to the appropriate division of your company asking for information about the product you are studying. Your letter should include a proper heading, date, salutation, body text and closing. Your tone should be friendly, not demanding.
- Your inquiry should first include an introduction from you, summarizing who you are and why you are writing to the company. *(If the reader cannot determine this within the first two sentences, you have not written a proper letter.)* Be sure to explain that you are an engineering student at UCSB and that you are studying their product as part of a class project.

- Ask your company to provide the name of an engineer or product manager who works with your product line. (Ideally, this would be the same person who designed your product, but—because most of our products are 10+ years old—this is not likely.) Explain that you are seeking general information about the product’s history and development, with an emphasis upon the engineering aspects. Provide your product’s model and serial numbers.
- Request that the recipient please forward your letter to the appropriate product manager or engineer, and to have them contact you as soon as is convenient. Inform them also that you will need your information as soon as possible due to class constraints.
- **NOTE:** I will also be giving you a cover letter to include with your group’s letter, explaining the purpose of our exercise and asking for the company’s cooperation. You should, therefore, include an enclosure notation at the bottom of your letter stating: “Enclosure: Letter from course instructor, N.D. Bradley.”

Due Dates

Assignment #1 is an individual assignment; assignment #1B is a group assignment. See the course website schedule for due dates.