

Contemplating Correspondence

Directions: *The following questions ask you to think about letters and the reasons that people write them.*

1. Why do people write letters? What are some specific events or purposes when letter writing is important or expected?

People write letters:

- To apply for or resign from jobs.
- To express thanks.
- To communicate sympathy.
- To complain to or compliment a business.
- To share their opinions.
- To persuade or influence others.
- To inform people about events or services.
- To stay in contact with people.
- To apply for scholarships or college admission.

2. When would sending a letter be more appropriate or convenient than using another means of communication?

Letter writing may be superior to telephone calls when

- The message may be too hard to relay in person (e.g., sharing bad news, admitting guilt, apologizing, offering condolences).
- When telephones are not available or convenient.

3. Letters can be written in different styles or formats. What are the two main formats for writing letters?

- Business Letter Format
- Friendly Letter Format

4. What benefits result from following a specified format when writing a letter?

- A specific format makes it easier for readers to identify key information (e.g., return address, sender's name).
- A clear format helps the reader quickly scan the document.

5. With the growing popularity of e-mail, IMs, and text messages, some people speculate that letter writing will become a thing of the past. What is your opinion? Will letter writing remain a vital part of business and personal communications?

Answers will vary. While many students may feel that electronic messaging is the way of the future, others may note that electronic messaging is not universally available.

Additionally, power outages, Internet access downtime, and cell phone coverage can affect electronic messages. Letter writing requires few tools and is a reliable form of communication under a variety of conditions. At times, letters are preferred for more formal communications and as a more permanent record.