

## Definition

There are two basic kinds of letters. You write *formal letters* (also known as *business letters*) to people you don't know very well. You write *informal letters* (also known as *personal letters*) to people you know well, like your friends and family. Today, most people write emails. In emails, you should still follow the rules for letter writing, but you don't have to worry about where to place the address and date.

## Guidelines

Write your address in the upper right corner. Then write the name and address of the person you are writing to on the left. American and British addresses start off with the street number followed by the name of the street. Remember to add the date. In the US, you write the name of the month, the day, and finally the year: January 20, 1956. In Great Britain, you write the day, the month, and then the year without any commas: 20 January 1956. Formal letters in the US start off with *Dear Sir*, *Dear Madam*, or the name and title of the person you are writing to, followed by a colon (:). In Britain, use a

comma instead of a colon. If you don't know the name of the person to whom you are writing, you can write: *To whom it may concern*, or, especially in Britain, *Dear Sir* or *Madam*. In America, formal letters end with the words *Yours sincerely*, *Sincerely yours*, or *Yours truly*. In Britain, formal letters end with *Yours faithfully* if the letter starts with *Sir* or *Madam*. If the person has been named, you write *Yours sincerely*. Other ways to end a letter are *Best regards*, *Kind regards*, and *Best wishes*. A comma should follow all these expressions.

In a formal letter, don't use slang expressions or contractions. You never write: *don't*, *can't*, *won't*, *I'd*, or *he's*. You have to write: *do not*, *cannot*, *will not*, *I would*, and *he is*.

In informal letters, you can use contractions and slang if you like. Start an informal letter with *Dear* plus the first name of the person you are writing to: *Dear John*, *Dear Aunt Abbey*, or *Dear Mom* – and follow it with a comma.

An informal letter can end with *Love* or *Hugs* (if it's a close friend or relative). Remember to follow it with a comma.

### Here is an example of a formal American letter:

The National Society for the Preservation of the Great Auk  
110 Audubon Street  
Birdsview, NY 10702

The Honorable Lotts E.V. Snowe  
Head of the Senate Committee on Global Warming  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

October 30, 2011

Dear Senator Snowe:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Society for the Preservation of the Great Auk.

We at the Society would like to take this opportunity to voice our concern about global warming and the threat this phenomenon poses to our nation, the world and, not least, to the diminishing population of Great Auks in the Arctic region. Unfortunately, not all of your colleagues share this concern. They say it is irrelevant merely because there have been no sightings of Great Auks since 1852.

The Society hopes that you will do your utmost to inform your fellow Committee members of the great peril that global warming poses to any surviving auks.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Aves Vogelsang  
Chairman

### Here is an example of an informal American letter:

Hotel Vulcano  
Via Roma  
Naples, Italy

10 Thames Street  
Newport, RI 02840

July 15, 2010

Dear Mom and Dad,

Having a wonderful time in Italy. How are things at home? Today we took a bus from Naples and then walked close to the top of Mount Vesuvius. The ground seemed solid enough. Hard to believe that the mountain could explode again! Yesterday we walked around Pompeii and saw the plaster casts of the dead Pompeians. They sure looked spooky. There was even a dead dog! The dog looked like it was trying to bite off its chain so that it could escape. Poor thing!

Miss you guys a lot!

Love and kisses,

Emma

### Definition

A diary entry is a personal account of what has happened on a specific day in your life. A diary entry can contain your views, thoughts, and reactions to things you have experienced or heard about. Some people even write secrets in their diaries – things they don't want to share with anyone else, even their best friends.

People often start their diary entries with the words *Dear Diary*. Why? Because in a way, a diary entry is a letter to yourself! When you write a letter, you want to tell your reader about all the interesting things you have experienced. The same thing is true of your diary entries.

### Guidelines

*Title:* Write the year and date of your diary entry. You can also write the words *Dear Diary*.

*Content and language:*

- Avoid long, boring descriptions like "Today I got out of bed and fed the cat. Then I put on my clothes and ate breakfast. After that I went to school..."
- Include your reflections on what you have experienced.
- The language in a diary is usually informal. This means that you may use contractions like *don't* and *can't*, and you can include slang words.

*Conclusion:* People often end their diary entries with a sentence about their plans or hopes for the next day. You can also end your entry with a funny remark or just about any way you like

London, 7 December 2006

Dear Diary,

Today was the strangest day of my life. I won't ever forget this day. It was about 11 o'clock and I was having French at school. My best friend, Emily, was pulling faces as usual. And as usual, Miss Lefarge, our French teacher, didn't see it.

There was a lot of rain and sleet outside. Then there was a terrific clap of thunder and some lightening. Good to be inside, I thought. But suddenly I heard a tremendous rushing sound. I looked out the window and saw all sorts of things flying about. A huge, dark cloud rolled up the street and made a dreadful sound. It sounded exactly like a train speeding by. Trees were pulled up by their roots, and I saw the front door fly off a house! Then something hit the windows, and they all shattered. There was glass all over the classroom, and Emily was bleeding. Part of the school's roof was missing too. The emergency services came, and we all had to leave school and be counted.

They say that only 6 people have been hurt, but 100 houses were damaged. Thankfully, no one has been killed. Emily's mum says that she'll be fine. But just imagine – I have experienced a tornado in London. Fancy that!



## Definition

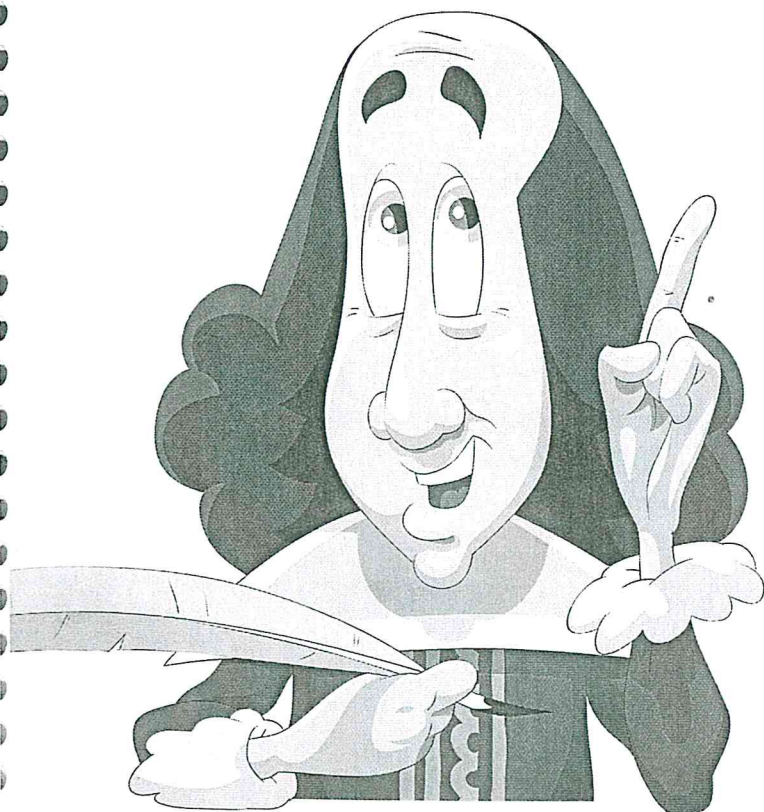
A short story is just that: short. There are countless ways of writing short stories. But all short stories share some characteristics. A short story usually takes place over a short period of time – perhaps just an hour or so. Short stories have only a few characters. They have a simple setting, and they have a simple plot. They also have some sort of conflict.

Character, setting,  
conflict, turning  
point...

## Guidelines

Here are some simple tips:

1. Choose and describe some interesting characters, for example, a school class on an excursion, an alien, or a love-sick vampire.
2. Choose and describe an interesting setting for your story, for example, a village in Bangladesh, a street in a Los Angeles slum, or a beach on a beautiful Caribbean island.
3. Choose a time frame. When does the story take place? At midnight on Christmas Eve? A New Year's Eve party on board a cruise ship? The morning of your Sweet Sixteen Party?
4. Choose a point of view. You can write your story as though you were one of the characters (first person narrator) or you can choose a narrator who relates the thoughts of just one character (third-person narrator with a limited point of view), or a narrator who relates the thoughts of several characters (third-person omniscient narrator – omniscient simply means *all knowing!*). If you choose a first-person point of view, remember to use the words "I" and "me" about the main character.
5. Short stories are about a conflict or problem. What's going to be the problem in your story? A pregnant woman is caught up in an earthquake? The main character has to rescue his girlfriend from a tsunami? A tornado hits New York City?
6. Build up the story's tension. For example, let the main character try to solve the problem or conflict two or three times – and fail each time.
7. Create a crisis or turning point in your story. The turning point is your character's last chance to overcome the problem or conflict.
8. Finally, you can let your character succeed – through bravery, skill, intelligence, hard work, luck, or love – or fail.
9. Think about a good ending. It can be a parallel to the beginning. It could be the same beautiful beach in the Caribbean, but a year later. It could be the same Los Angeles street. Just use your imagination!





## Definition

A news article is simply a piece of writing that deals with the news. You find news articles on the Internet, in newspapers, and in magazines. News articles can deal with current events, subjects of general interest, such as sport or what celebrities are doing, or they can deal with an important topic or issue, for example, global warming or victims of a disaster.

## Guidelines

**Research:** Start by researching the topic of your article. Remember to take relevant notes.

**Headline:** The headline is supposed to attract the interest of your reader. Headlines are short – usually just four or five words. In the English-speaking world, headlines often use alliteration (the repetition of a particular sound) or puns (little jokes that play with the sound or meaning of words). For example, you might see headlines saying: “Cop Kills Kid” or “Iron Man Steals Screen”.

**By-line:** The by-line usually comes right after the headline in newspaper and magazine articles. It says who wrote the article.

**Introduction:** The first paragraph of your article is the introduction. The introduction gives the reader the main points of the article. It tells the reader who, what, where, and when. *Who* is involved, *what* the article is about, *where* it happened, and *when* it happened. The first paragraph gives the reader the most important facts. In fact, many readers only read the first paragraph of a news article!

**Body:** The next paragraphs are called the body. The body gives the reader more details. The body tries to answer the questions *how* and *why*.

**Quotes:** Most news articles use quotes to support the facts. Your article should include statements from an expert or eye-witness. These statements should be in quotation marks (inverted commas).

**Photograph and Caption:** Many news articles include a photo of what happened or of the person the article is about. Remember to include a caption with the photo. The caption tells the reader what the photo is of.

**Conclusion:** Your final paragraph, the conclusion, summarizes the main points of the article.

## A Pain in the Ash

BY H.E. PHESTOS, THE DAILY TORYGRAPH  
23 APRIL 2010

**Flights throughout Europe cancelled by ash from Icelandic volcano. Holidaymakers stranded.**

Safety concerns continue to ground all flights in and out of Britain. Experts fear that even tiny amounts of the glass-like ash may cause damage to jet engines and lead to engine failure. At least 150,000 Brits remain trapped abroad by the ash chaos. No one can say when they will be able to return.

A spokesman for NATS (National Air Traffic Services) said: “There will be no flights permitted in UK-controlled airspace other than in emergency situations.”

Among the desperate travellers are newly-weds Kate and William Prince from Windsor. The couple had been enjoying their honeymoon at Walt Disney World, Florida, but have been forced to spend the last three days camped out at Miami’s airport. “We just want to go home,” said teary-eyed Kate, “I miss my cat, and my mum must be frantic.”

Some people in the airline industry contend that the severe safety restrictions are unnecessary. “Let’s just get on and fly,” said one experienced pilot.

In the meantime, Kate, William and thousands like them must make the best of it. “We mustn’t grumble; we must just grin and bear it,” said William and added with typical British pluck, “but it is a right pain in the ash.”



### Definition

An essay is a short text in which the writer attempts to express his or her opinion or views about a subject. The writer attempts to persuade and convince the reader that these opinions and views are the right ones.

### Guidelines

All you need to do is write 5 good paragraphs! Just follow these step-by-step instructions, and you, too, can write a good essay!

### The Five Paragraph Essay

1. Paragraph one introduces the reader to the **topic**. You want to tell your reader what the topic is, but you also want to grab the reader's attention. Don't write: "I am going to write about bla, bla, bla..." Start with something exciting. It can be a freaky fact or a strange experience you've had. After that, you should write three sentences that say something more about your topic and support your viewpoint. These will be your **three subtopics**.
2. In paragraph two, you take the theme of **subtopic one** and add at least three sentences with details supporting your viewpoint. Make sure you start with a linking word or phrase so you connect the paragraph with the previous one.
3. In paragraph three, you take the theme of **subtopic two** and add at least three sentences with details supporting your viewpoint. Make sure you start off with a linking word or phrase to connect the paragraph with the previous one.
4. In paragraph four, you take the theme of **subtopic three** and add at least three sentences with details supporting your viewpoint. Make sure you start off with a linking word or phrase to connect the paragraph with the previous one.
5. Paragraph five is your **conclusion**. Don't introduce anything new! Get back to the theme of your first paragraph and repeat the theme of the three subtopics. Try to make your last sentence stick in the mind of your reader.

What are linking words and phrases? They are words that help you connect one sentence to another or one paragraph to another in a logical way. Some common words and phrases are: *nevertheless, still, even so, however, obviously, clearly* and *on the other hand*.

Here is a sample essay. You can see how the theme of the three subtopics becomes the theme of the three middle paragraphs, and how the author returns to these subtopics in the conclusion.

## WE WANT GLOBAL WARMING – OR DO WE?

1. So where's the Global Warming they have been promising us? We hear about it on TV and read about it in the papers, but have you noticed any Global Warming where you live? The last few years, winters in Northern Europe have been harsh and snowy, and we have had to shovel tons of snow (**subtopic one**). In fact, temperatures in ancient Europe were far warmer than now (**subtopic two**). But what about the rest of the world? (**subtopic three**)
2. For the past few years, winters in Northern Europe have not been getting warmer; they have been getting colder. Meteorological institutes across Europe all agree that temperatures have been lower, and there has been more snow recently than in the past twenty or thirty years. Trains and buses grind to a halt each winter. People fall on the ice and break their legs, and homeowners have to get up at dawn and shovel away the snow. Wouldn't it be nice if it were warmer?
3. In fact, some climate experts think that Northern Europe may be experiencing another "Little Ice Age." Botanists who study ancient pollen samples tell us that temperatures at the time of the Roman Empire were milder than today. When the

Vikings first settled Greenland, the climate was far less harsh than now. Temperatures gradually fell during the course of the Middle Ages. There was another temperature dip around the year 1600. True, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen a rise in temperatures. However, this may just be a normal variation.

4. Even so, we cannot ignore the possibility of Global Warming. Europe's cold winters may be a result of rising temperatures elsewhere. Australia, parts of South America and Africa have seen unusually hot weather. There have been droughts followed by unusual and massive flooding with shark sightings in the streets of Australian suburbs. Crops have failed or been drowned in rains. If this pattern continues, people will starve. Nor is there any doubt that the Arctic regions are getting warmer. Polar bears and other forms of wildlife are threatened.
5. Obviously, Europe is getting cold winters with lots of snow. Experts also tell us that Europe was once much warmer than today. But the rest of the world is experiencing rising temperatures, droughts, and floods. Global Warming is serious, and Europe's snowy, damp, cold winters may be, paradoxically, just one more aspect of this frightening phenomenon.