

Soft Skills
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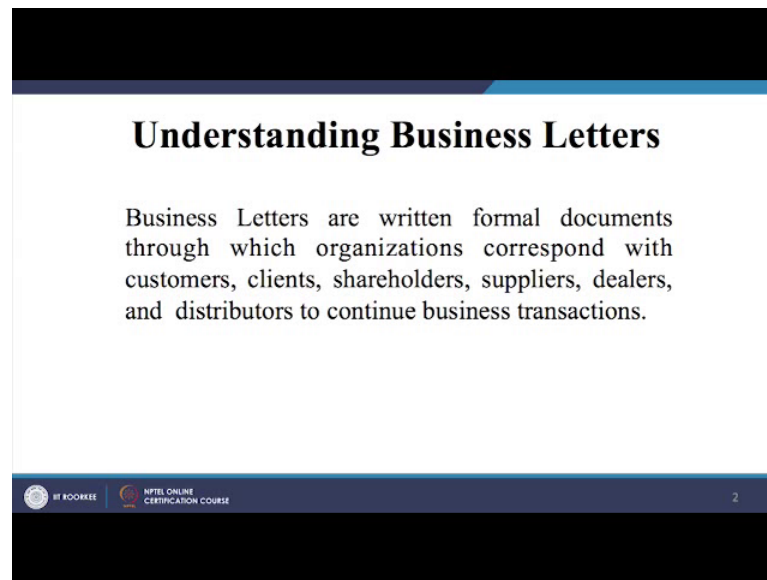
Lecture - 27
Business Letters

Hello, I welcome you all to NPTL online lectures on the course and title Soft Skills. Hope you are all enjoying this course. Presently we are dealing with the section writing skills. And in previous lectures we have talked about what writing skills are what are the various principles involved in writing skills. Now we are going to talk about business letters. As we remember well we have talked about the various documents that you as a student aspiring to be a professional would have to write in the days to come. And in that we had decided that will have separate lectures on business letters.

And the lectures that follow today are going to be concentrating on business letters. Now the question is what actually are business letters, and why do we need to write them. But before we go into the details of business letters, let us also try to understand what are letters and why do we need them do we in an age of technology really need letters. Of course, many of you might be feeling that in a technically advanced age of today letters have lost their importance. It may only be a half truth because as you see when you have to deal with customers clients shareholders, and all organizations actually need a sort of communication.

And this communication in this written form can be termed as business letters. Now if we have a look at what letters were in the olden days, you will find that there has been a sea change in the drafting of letters. I do remember a line from an essay where a lady in Horace Walpoles accesses I am I write to you because I have nothing to do, I finish my letter because I have nothing to say. Dear friends in an age today we have a lot to say and we have a lot to write and that is why we have to draft business letters.

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Now, business letters as the term itself says it has the word business involved in it meaning thereby, these are letters which are actually meant for the purposes of business.

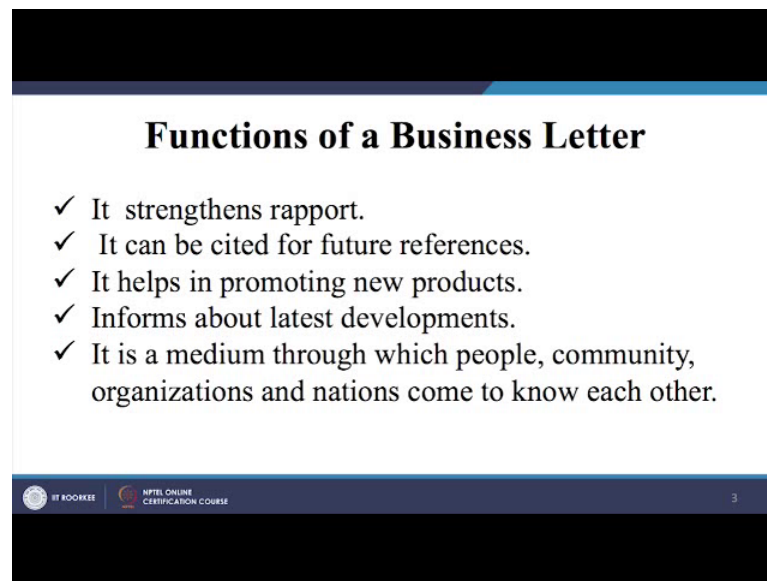
And specially these written documents are a bit formal. Now here there is a point of caution to know that when you write letters I mean personal letters or when you write letters for general purposes. And the letters for business they are totally different from each other. Now what are actually the various differences, because when you write a personal letter you have the person whom you know very well, but when you write a business letter on many of the occasions you do not know them. And since the purposes of business writings are different naturally they will have differences of various kinds, in terms of tone in terms of content, in terms of approach.

And that is why in order to succeed today in a world which is drowned by business in every walk of life, you have to understand the importance of business letters. And moreover you also should know how to write letters for different occasions and in different ways. What actually are the differences every letter is different every letter is distinct, in olden days when people used to write letters. They actually used to be also very careful about the weather, and it is said that a good letter written in those days used to act like a good essay.

Now things have changed needs have changed expectations have changed. And specially at the workplace or the business place, there are variety of situations which have actually

necessitated the difference in terms of letter writing. Now what actually are the functions that a business letter serves, a business letter as we have been saying. It is actually between an organization and a customer it may also be between an organization and firm it is also between individuals at times when a person a person I mean an official writes a letter to another official.

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Functions of a Business Letter

- ✓ It strengthens rapport.
- ✓ It can be cited for future references.
- ✓ It helps in promoting new products.
- ✓ Informs about latest developments.
- ✓ It is a medium through which people, community, organizations and nations come to know each other.

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Hence through business letters it is actually a sort of renewal of rapport it is a communication which helps speed up the process of business. Moreover letters can be kept as a record and that is why they can be cited for references in terms of future dealings. You might every now and then come across certain things certain dealings which you had in with an organization. In past and once again when the need arises you want to write to them, naturally you can cite your previous experience, you can refer to the previous dealings and that way business becomes more smooth.

Moreover every organization wants to know what are the developments in a particular area. And for that you will find that it is through a letter. It is through a letter that you can promote a product. It is through a letter that you can also understand the feedback of the customers. It is also through letters that you can enhance your business activities outside one state outside one country outside one organization and that is how these letters can create a beautiful rapport with the organization as well as with managers. It is actually a medium through which people community organization and at times, even nations also

come to know each other. That is why the importance of business letters is not on the wane, but it is on the rise; however, we feel that with the technical advancements Nowadays the letter that earlier used to be, I mean with the help of the pen and paper.

Of course, that might have been substituted by technical gadgets and people have been writing letters by word processing them, but after all it is a sort of a writing which has to take care of the other party. Business letter also demonstrates even though it is between 2 organizations, but it is a person who writes a person who writes the letter he writes on behalf of the organization, and at times you see that the person who is writing the letter his personality, his ability, his thinking caliber and all these they also come to light.

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- ✓ It demonstrates a person's ability to think clearly and logically.
- ✓ It is to inform, explain, persuade, motivate, induce, and promote.
- ✓ Like MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
- ✓ It provides feedback and helps improve quality

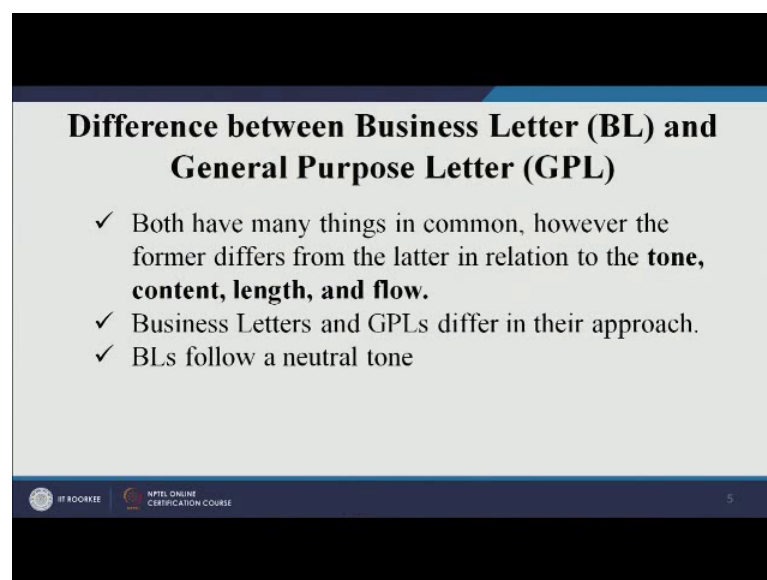
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And there has been seen that many organizations while hiring their employees, they see to it that they also hire employees who are not only good at spoken skills, but at a written skills also. And when they say written skills they also have these business letters in their mind. Because when you are writing a business letter, especially in an organization you are actually trying to convince the other party, you are either trying to have some information or you are trying to get some information. You are trying to order for goods, you are trying to also give feedback about a particular item or a particular say product, but then in some way or the other it looks like an MOU that is memorandum of understanding.

No business can run without the proper documentation and dissemination of business letters. It is through letters that most of the businesses are being transacted nowadays, and when you are continuously writing letter to one organization or to one particular person you also try to understand by the feedback and you also try to bring certain changes in certain products that you have launched or you are going to launch because we are living in a competitive edge where it is only through information that we can make ourselves stronger. Now the need here is to know the basic differences between a business letter and a general purpose letter. Let me tell you here that a general purpose letter is the one that you write to your relatives to your friends to your kinsmen and to others.

But when you write a business letter you are actually writing it to an organization, whether it is a person, but remember while the exchange of letters is between 2 organizations it is actually between 2 people also, 2 persons also. Hence the need of the are is to see that you maintain a proper cordiality and a cooperation while writing a little. We have already discussed about the various principles in one of our lectures when we are talking about the various principles of business writing. And when we say business writing business letters is also one of them.

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Difference between Business Letter (BL) and General Purpose Letter (GPL)

- ✓ Both have many things in common, however the former differs from the latter in relation to the **tone, content, length, and flow.**
- ✓ Business Letters and GPLs differ in their approach.
- ✓ BLs follow a neutral tone

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Now, the point of difference between these 2 letters I mean general purpose letters and the business letters is that of tone.

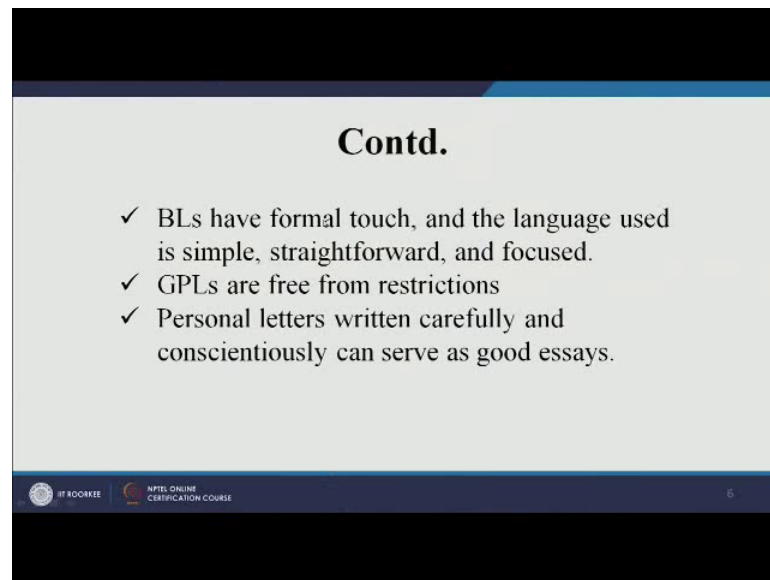
Now, the question is what should the tone be like, what should the content you know when you write a personal letter you do not have too much restrictions you are not confined you are not bound, I do remember many personal letters of great writers like Charles Lamb, Thomas Gray, Carlyle like Robert Lynd all these people who had been very famous in terms of letter writing. They also saw to it that they also depicted the weather. They also talked about the health of some people in the family and all.

But then when we come to the business letters these things are not to be taken into consideration. Business letters means talking about business only and not having talks about family matters and all. Hence it is not only different in terms of content, it is also different in terms of tone. What should the tone be like? We have already talked about in previous lecture, that there can be 2 tones one can be a persuasive tone. Most of the business documents for that matter while you are going to explain while we are going to write you are going to follow a persuasive tone. But remember in business people always want that the writing has to be very explicit and not implicit I mean clarity.

Which we have said will be the hallmark of every writing and business letter is also not an exception in that regard. Hence when we talk about the tone of course, you have to be very direct I mean whatever you want you have to specify, you cannot create a background in the very first paragraph and then in the second one you will go and talk about it is not like that. Because in business time is a commodity and you have to save time and for that letter writers especially who are writing business letters should see that they are also maintaining a cordiality, but they are also seeing to it that time is also saved.

Remember that one has to follow a neutral tone. Here you cannot be very subjective you cannot be very emotive as you are when you are writing a general purpose letter. You have to be neutral, but at the same time your tone should not be anyway offending or it should not be hurting anyway it should not be insulting. Most of the time it has been seen that people when they are angry and if they write something that results in becoming either sarcastic. Sometimes it becomes ironical, sometimes it also becomes hurting, but that will not be allowed here when you are writing a business letter because business letters serve a specific purpose.

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- ✓ BLs have formal touch, and the language used is simple, straightforward, and focused.
- ✓ GPLs are free from restrictions
- ✓ Personal letters written carefully and conscientiously can serve as good essays.

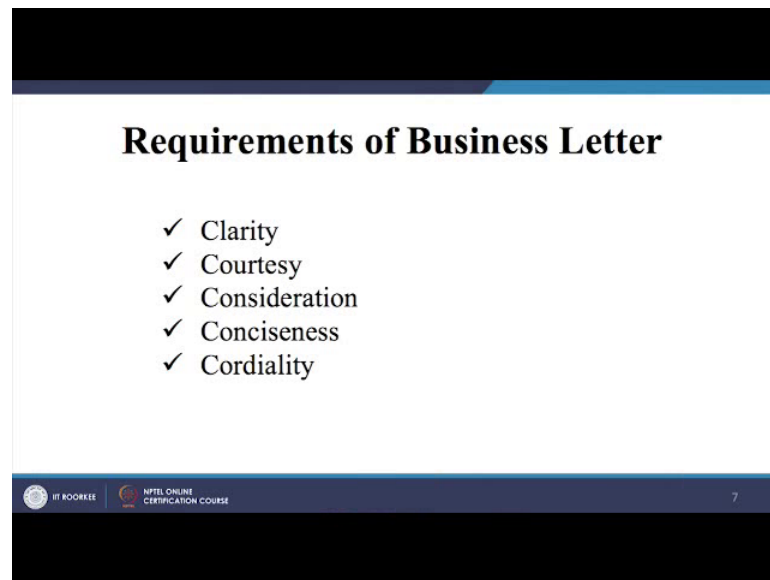
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It has got a formal touch as you will find business letters have formal touch, and the language used is very simple. In principles of writing we also discussed, that there is no room for difficult words. There is no room for say sesquipedalian or lengthy words lengthy sentences.

It has to be a business letter has to be formal, but then the language has to be very simple. So, that people I mean both the people who are sending and the other one who is to receive, this would understand the basic purpose. Personal letters as I said if they are written very carefully they can amount to or they can result in 2 very beautiful essays. We have plethora of examples when the letters of Robert Lynd letters of A G Gardiner letters of Thomas Gray, Carlyle Lord, Chesterfield.

And all they have been very exemplary in terms of letting people know how pleasant and art letter writing is of course, letter writing is a pleasant art, but here when you are in the world of business you are to see that letter writing has to be taken great care of while you are writing from one organization to another since you are representing that organization. Now of course, since there are differences galore you also must know how should a business letter be drafted.

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Requirements of Business Letter

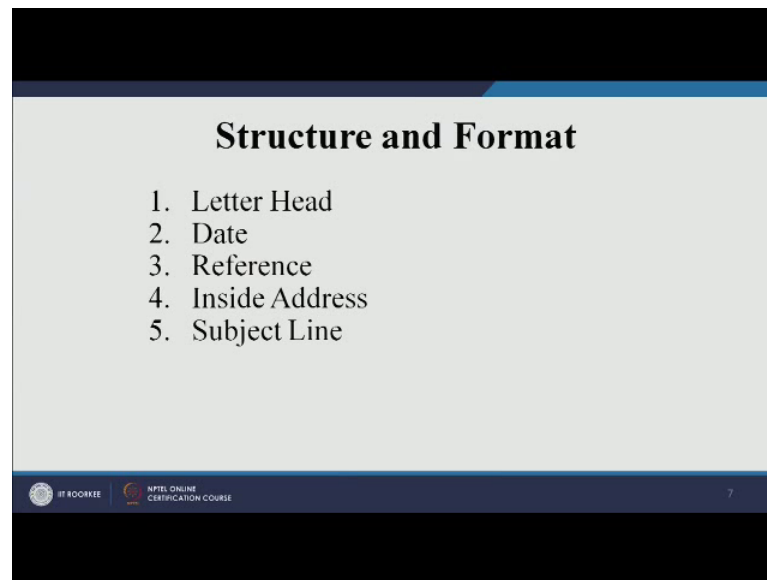
- ✓ Clarity
- ✓ Courtesy
- ✓ Consideration
- ✓ Conciseness
- ✓ Cordiality

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What actually are the essential requirements? Dear friends in an age today of electronic mails, chats and voicemails letter writing of course, have been paid or are being paid less attention.

And that is why there has been a lot of disturbances, and lot of problems when a person has to write letter. In many of the situations people actually do not attach importance to layout format structure. But these things are really a part and parcel of the letter, because it denotes the practice of letter being written in one organization. Now let us try to understand what are the basic structure and format of a letter.

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Here we will talk about all the structural part of the letter one by one. A letter especially a business letter will have at least 10 parts. Suppose you are working in an organization or you are going to work in an organization, when you are to write a letter you will find that all the organizations they have their printed letter heads.

So, the first item in terms of structure is a letter head now what is the letter head and how where should the letter head be. In most of the organizations though they vary in terms of their letter heads in some organizations will find the letter head is always at the top center, but yet in some it may also be towards the left while some organizations follow a letter head to be on the right hand side or some follow it to be on the left hand side and the right hand side they write the address. And other telephones and other things, but then you are to follow the letter head which your organization follows. You will find when you write on a letter head actually you are representing an organization.

That is why follow the practice even in terms of letter writing and the format also. You have to follow the format which said organization follows. So, the first is the letter head, then comes the date, then comes the reference inside address subject line.

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6. Salutation
7. Body
8. Complimentary Close
9. Signature
10. Enclosure

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Then salutation body complimentary close signature line and enclosures. Now let us try to understand one by one. You see my dear friends, it is very important for all of you to know the structural part of the letter, because in a whirlwind of emails and technical exchanges you we have perhaps said a goodbye 2 references, and we have said a goodbye to salutation. Salutations have become very indiscreet people do not bother to give salutations when they write.

And you know our habits are often spoiled because of the excessive use of technology excessive use of computers, but in many organizations they see to it that they maintain this decorum and they follow are the requisite guidelines of letter writing. Now what is a letter head? As I said earlier many organizations they have different ways of having a letter head.

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Letter Head

- At the top centre of the page (on the right-hand side also)
- The letter head shows the exact location, telephone, fax number and the website information.

Company Name
Slogan here

Logo Here

Address: 46 Broadway Road, Durban North, 4001
Postal: PO Box 2145, Durban North, 4001
Tel: (+27 31) 009 2254
Fax: (+27) 866 521 086

Email: info@companyname.co.za
Website: www.companyname.co.za
VAT No: 2536 250 154
CK No: CK 2001/066958/21

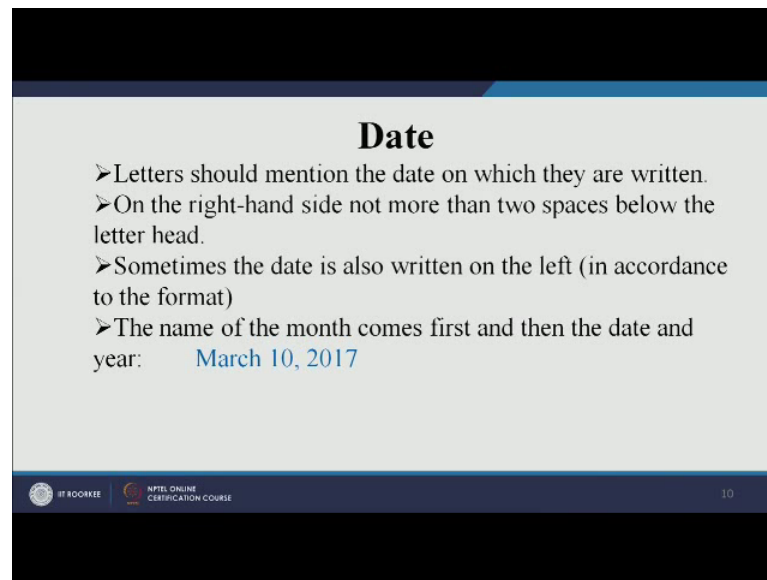
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It varies from one organization to another. Here you can see in this organization. Here if the name of the organization is in the middle, know at the top center on the right hand page. The logo may be on the right logo may not be in the center.

But then this may vary also if you are working in some other organization where the practices that the letter head will follow the address or the logo on the left hand side or the address on the right hand side. So, you have to maintain the practice that is allowed and that is followed in the organization where you are working. Say to it that the logo has all the details such as the location, the telephone, the fax number, the website information, everything because you know sometimes or the other when you are writing to them suppose you get a letter from one organization, and you are going to respond to them. Maybe sometimes you are not in a position to write letters, but then you want to simply talk to them.

So, it is only through the letter head of that organization that you get the number and you can just give them a call, and should know about the developments or what sort of queries.

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Date

- Letters should mention the date on which they are written.
- On the right-hand side not more than two spaces below the letter head.
- Sometimes the date is also written on the left (in accordance to the format)
- The name of the month comes first and then the date and year: **March 10, 2017**

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You have next to that is the date line. Remember you are actually to mention the date. And the date should be written as the same on which you are writing, this date actually since you know all these letters are going to be kept in record. So, the date has to be mentioned and it is through date that when you respond, you will also make out of this date a reference date. You know many, many business letters you will find as for your letter number this and this dated this and this. So, what is it? Actually this is about the date.

So, on the right hand side not more than 2 spaces you have to write the date. Even if the company has got a logo, it may not have the date written. Date will be written by you I mean by the letter writer. And the name of the month comes first most of the organizations they write the date as here. Suppose it is March 10. So, they will write like this, March 10 2017. Some organizations have the practice of writing 10, 3, 2, 0, 1, 7. In certain cases they may have some differences, but remember you are not to change it you are actually to follow the practice which is allowed in your organization. Next to date is this is the reference.

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Reference

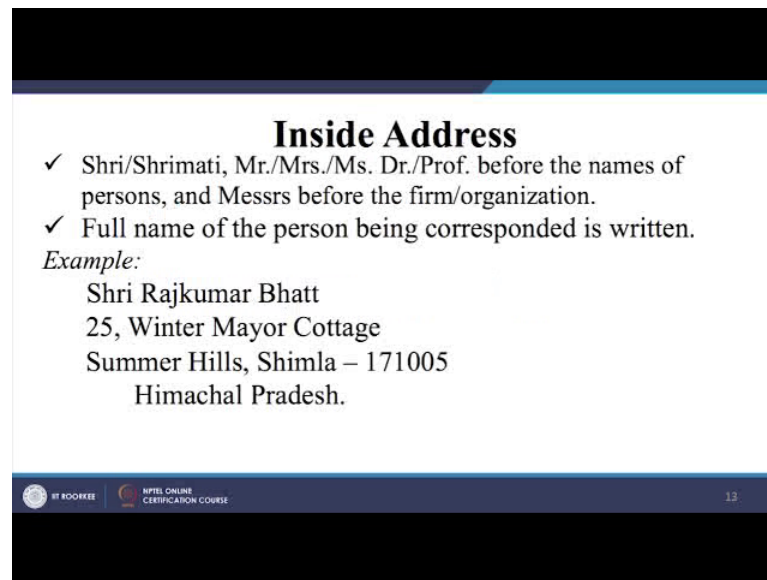
REF. NO. T/8/BPVP/0803/2017
or
Our Reference: HCW/AF/08/2016
Your Reference: ICSEic/AB/08/RW/16

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Now, here as I was saying please see. If you find that the date is there on the letter head the date that you write on the letter head. This will actually help you write the reference. And most of the business letters whether it is a letter of query, it is a letter of inquiry, it is actually a letter of our orders or whatsoever. It is actually the reference number. Suppose something went wrong because you know things, may go wrong in business now nothing everything is not in our hands. So, something goes wrong and if you are going to write that and business in business people are so busy that it is very difficult to decipher which letter which date. That is why the reference is written. And when you write the reference you write both the references. I mean your reference and their reference.

So, you may also mention our reference this here, the date is there sometimes the month is there sometimes the departmental you know departmental information is also there that all these are given in brief. They may be given in a say in a very brief manner as here at HCW, I mean this may be a sort of this may be a sort of code for a particular section or a particular department, ICS this again we may be instrumentation center like something like that. So, you have to be aware of from where you are writing. And when you are writing please put both of this our reference, and your reference next is a inside address.

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Inside Address

- ✓ Shri/Shrimati, Mr./Mrs./Ms. Dr./Prof. before the names of persons, and Messrs before the firm/organization.
- ✓ Full name of the person being corresponded is written.

Example:
Shri Rajkumar Bhatt
25, Winter Mayor Cottage
Summer Hills, Shimla – 171005
Himachal Pradesh.

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I mean this is actually the address I mean the person this is the address of the recipient. When you are writing the address it will again once again after you have written the date, just you have to come. Now here it is very important to tell you that if you are going to write a letter in a format which allows the date to be written on the right or to the left. This once again varies from organization to organization. We shall in the next lecture talk about how every organization will have a different format of letter writing. So, depending upon the format after the date please write the inside address and when you write the inside address you know in many cases you are writing to the manager, but in certain cases you know the name of the manager.

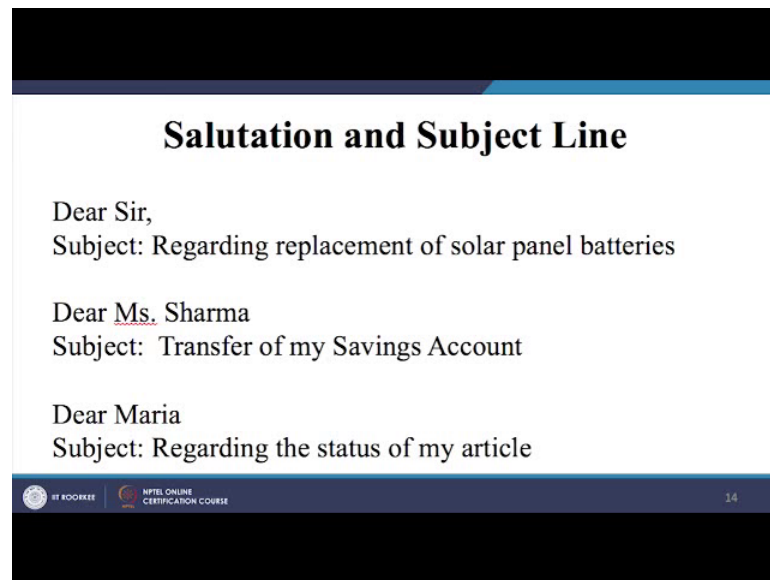
So, if you know the name of the manager you can write and if the business transaction is going on for a long time and you know each other, then only you can write mister such and such. But if you do not know and you are writing the letter for the first time you can simply write the general manager or whatsoever especially when you are writing from the organization, and if it is a letter where you do not want to write the name it is often written Messrs before the firm; Messrs such and such. And in case you know the person to whom you are corresponding you can write, but when you are writing the inside address see to it that the inside address is written correctly the inside address is written accurately.

For example the name of the person, but before every name either right depending upon the gender depending upon the designation if you are writing to a person, and who is a doctorate you should write doctor such and such. But then if you know the name I mean it is always advisable that you write the full name, Shri Rajkumar Bhatt as I have written here Shri Rajkumar Bhatt 25 winter mayor cottage. I mean this is the entire address Summer Hills, Shimla and then the Himachal Pradesh. I mean this is the complete address which is written in inside address. Next to inside address is of utmost importance is subject line as well as salutation.

My dear friends with a very sad hurt let me tell you that in this age of email. This salutation has undergone a change, you know email in email you will find people not writing dear hey why like this, but remember when you are writing a letter and specially a business letter, you have to be very considerate. We talked about the courtesy and consideration in the previous lecture. So, please write dear sir or dear madam. In certain cases where you do not know the person persons gender you can write the both dear sir oblique madam. But in such cases where you know the person is a man you write dear sir. Dear is to be written. I have seen many letters coming where people are even confused whether to write dear or not.

Sometimes it becomes very difficult, but you know since we are cordial beings it is all this appropriately write dear sir. Now the question about punctuation also varies from one format to another. In a certain format after dear sir you can write the comma, but when you are writing a full block form you will find which will discuss later, that there is no need of putting a comma. And next to that just after dear sir has to be a subject line. I mean business people are very busy that is why they are business people. And of course, we do not have much time maybe at times. People may not have too much time to read the entire content of the letter. So, it is only through the subject line that they come to know what it is about.

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Salutation and Subject Line

Dear Sir,
Subject: Regarding replacement of solar panel batteries

Dear Ms. Sharma
Subject: Transfer of my Savings Account

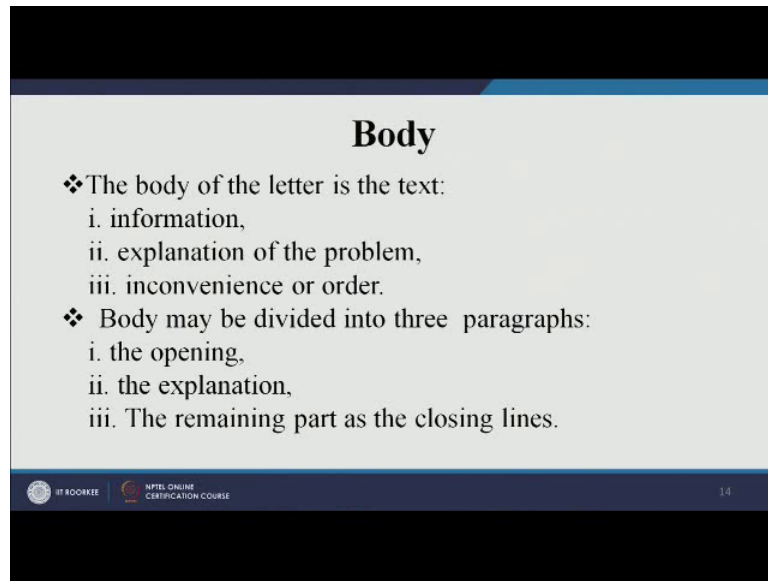
Dear Maria
Subject: Regarding the status of my article

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So, in subject line please see that you write clearly about the subject, for example, regarding replacement of solar panel batteries, or transfer of my savings account, or regarding the status of my article. Like this you know use your subjects will vary. So, depending upon your subject please write the subject very clearly and just after you have written the subject now is the time to begin your letter. Once you start your letter I mean this we call as the letter body. This letter body depending upon your need and the expectation of the other party this may vary.

But then here you are to talk about the subject or the business that you want to transact, sometimes it may be 2 paragraphs sometimes it may be 3 paragraphs, but see to it that brevity is the soul of wit it is always better to write the less and mean more. For that you need to have a control over your vocabulary and all, but it has already been seen that the body of the letter has to be divided into 3 paragraphs. The first paragraph will be the beginning where specifically I mean I mean in a very direct manner you will come to the topic and then finally, what matter is to be transacted.

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Body

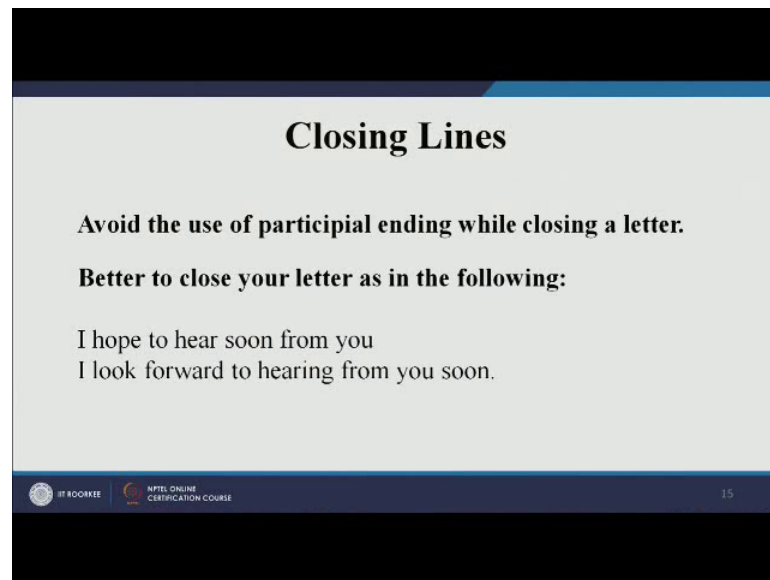
- ❖ The body of the letter is the text:
 - i. information,
 - ii. explanation of the problem,
 - iii. inconvenience or order.
- ❖ Body may be divided into three paragraphs:
 - i. the opening,
 - ii. the explanation,
 - iii. The remaining part as the closing lines.

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But next to that will be a little bit of discussion depending upon the nature of the letter, whether it is sales letter complaint letter whatsoever.

So, depending upon the nature it may also vary and once you have completed your letter the remaining part will be disclosing line of your letter. Remember when you close the line majority of people even now while they are going to close a line or give the complimentary close, what they do is they have a party CPL ending. For example, they will say waiting to see you hoping to get your response. All these are negatives all these are not you know welcome. It is always better to write the complete sentence for example, you can say I wait to get your letter soon I hope to hear from you soon. I hope I look forward to meet you soon.

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Closing Lines

Avoid the use of participial ending while closing a letter.

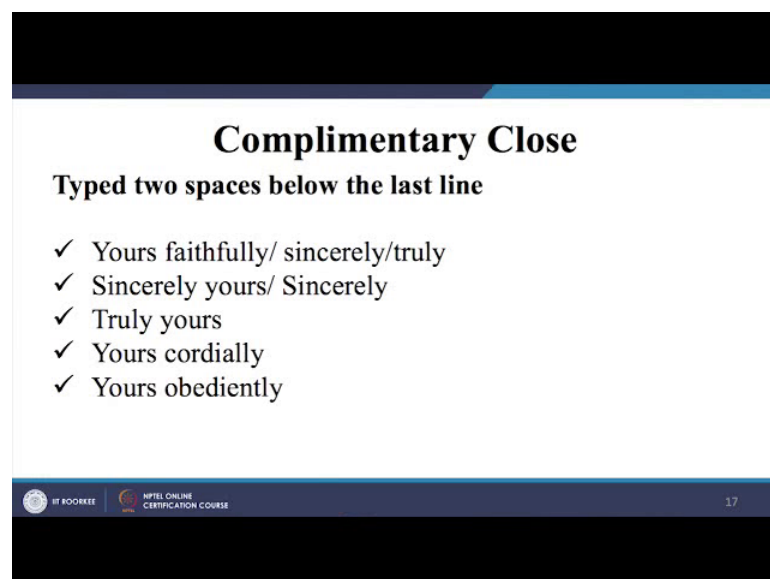
Better to close your letter as in the following:

I hope to hear soon from you
I look forward to hearing from you soon.

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I look forward to receiving your answer soon. I mean these are the ways which you should adopt when you are going to close your letter. I mean when you are going to give a compliment complimentary close and then finally, ending your letter. Once you end your letter I mean here also majority of people write your faithfully, but then this also varies sometimes people also write sincerely, depending upon your nature with the person.

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Complimentary Close

Typed two spaces below the last line

- ✓ Yours faithfully/ sincerely/truly
- ✓ Sincerely yours/ Sincerely
- ✓ Truly yours
- ✓ Yours cordially
- ✓ Yours obediently

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That is why it is always better to write yours faithfully or sincerely. Then there are also people who write yours truly nowadays there has been a fashion when people try to show more cordiality and they also write yours cordially, but you know on an average you know you will find that when they write your sincerely or yours faithfully a good. Number of people put an apostrophe after your, this is wrong. So, at this stage let me advise you, that when you write letter write yours completely and then write sincerely. A student writing to his teacher may write yours obediently, but then the general trend or one thing that can save your face always is either your sincerely or yours faithfully. Having given a complimentary close comes the signature line where the writer of the letter need to put his name and if because we are nowadays word processing our letter. So, what we do is we write our name in a bracket.

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Signature Line

It is always written below the complimentary line.

Yours faithfully
Pratul Singh

Yours sincerely
(Pranita Goswami)
Senior Sales Manager

Sometimes, when on behalf of or for an individual some other officer signs, the latter has to write, as in the following example.

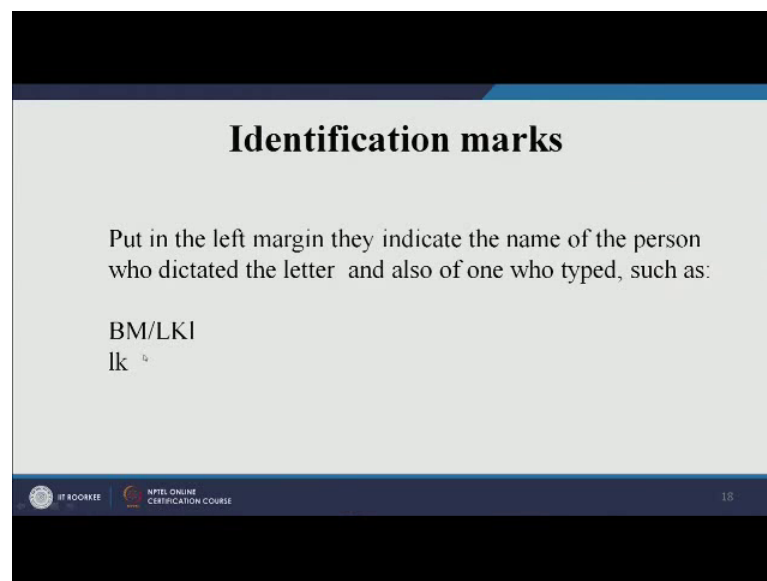
Yours faithfully
Bhagwan Das
for Arvind Prakashan, Delhi.

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And we leave some space between yours faithfully and your name because we can put our signature. For example, here you can see it is written your sincerely Pranita Goswami, and the gap is there. I mean it is always advisable to give 2 lines gap so that the person may put his or her signature. Depend sometimes you may also write on behalf of your organization, for some organization. In that case if you are not in the position of writing letters every now and then and you are writing on somebody's behalf you write for Arvind Prakashan for such, and such organization and you write your name and put your signature.

Once you know in business world there is actually a practice that people dictate their letters, especially people at the top posts. Those who do not have time enough they actually dictate their letters and somebody is typing the letters. So, in such a case if it is. So, there has to be just after the signature line there are identification marks. Say for example, if I am dictating my letters, and somebody is taking a note for it naturally are these abbreviated forms as I have put here I mean BM is the person who is actually dictating the letter another person LKI, I mean this is somebody.

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Identification marks

Put in the left margin they indicate the name of the person who dictated the letter and also of one who typed, such as:

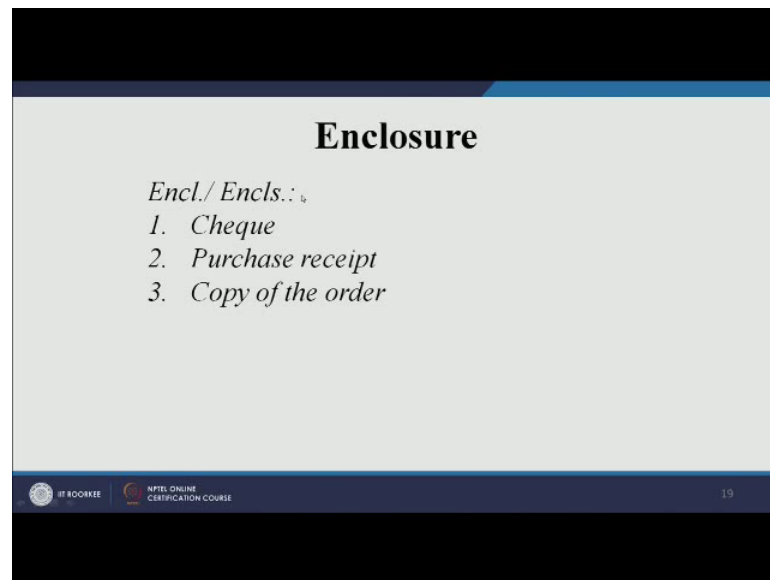
BM/LKI
lk

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Who is actually who has typed the letter in certain cases the name of the person who dictates is not there. There are initials and these are the names these are actually the names of the people who have just typed the letter. Now when you have given the identification marks, another important thing is in some letters we will find especially in business letters you will find that you have to attach something you know, sometimes you have to give some supplementary a piece of paper or whatsoever some documents as a part of evidence and all. So, for that you have a special column where you can call enclosures remember this is actually a safe way to put enclosures.

Because sometimes in organizations it may so happen that some of your pages are lost. So, if on the first page where you write enclosure and you also mention 3 pages in bracket you can also write or you can also mention.

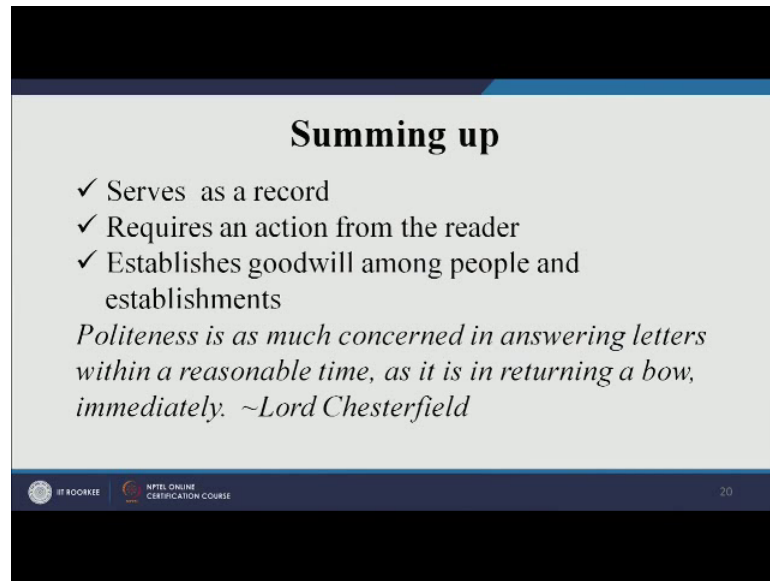
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I mean enclosures here you can write 3 and you can also say you can also say that you have enclosed the check, have also enclosed the purchase receipt, or you have also enclosed a copy of the order. So, these things are actually for the evidence. So, do put it in a business letter. And once you have done all these get ready with an envelope. Now depending upon your letter size you should choose the envelope in many organizations, do have the printed envelope in which you can put your letter and the letter is ready to be posted.

Now once you have done all that please see that letters especially business letters they serve as a record they are to be kept because you know for future references. It is these letters which can come to our help, but then what is of utmost importance is these exchange of letters are actually the exchange of goodwill. That is why we say it builds relationship and every business it is actually the outcome of a goodwill it is outcome of our relationship. That is why the language when you talk about the language see to it that you are throughout polite.

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Summing up

- ✓ Serves as a record
- ✓ Requires an action from the reader
- ✓ Establishes goodwill among people and establishments

Politeness is as much concerned in answering letters within a reasonable time, as it is in returning a bow, immediately. ~Lord Chesterfield

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Because you know as lord chesterfield one of the essayist of olden days, he also advises that politeness is as much concerned in answering letters within a reasonable time as it is in returning above immediately.

So, all of you as future letter writers will maintain this politeness and cordiality so that your business letters try to bridge the gap and try to ensure a positive relation between 2 organizations, since they will help in making a business grow making a business tribe. With this in mind we shall in the next lecture talk about the format and will also talk about the language.

Thank you very much.