



The Style of Official Documents

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Official documents are written in a formal, “cold” or matter-of-fact style of speech. The style of official documents, or ‘officials’ as it is sometimes called, is not homogeneous and is represented by the following sub-styles, or varieties:

- 1. the language of business documents,
- 2. the language of legal documents,
- 3. the language of diplomacy,
- 4. the language of military documents.



The main aim of this type of communication is to state the conditions binding two parties in an undertaking. These parties may be:

- a) the state and the citizen, or citizen and citizen (jurisdiction);
- b) a society and its members (statute or ordinance);
- c) two or more enterprises or bodies (business correspondence or contracts);
- d) two or more governments (pacts, treaties);
- e) a person in authority and a subordinate (orders, regulations, authoritative directions);
- f) the board or presidium and the assembly or general meeting (procedures acts, minutes), etc.





The vocabulary is characterized not only by the use of special terminology but the choice of lofty (bookish) words and phrases:

- *plausible* (=possible);
- *to inform* (=to tell);
- *to assist* (=to help);
- *to cooperate* (=to work together);
- *to promote* (=to help something develop);
- *to secure* (=to make certain) *social progress*;
- *with the following objectives/ends* (=for these purposes);
- *to be determined/resolved* (=to wish);
- *to endeavor* (=to try); *to proceed* (=to go); *inquire* (to ask).



Here they are used not only as conventional symbols but as signs of the military code, which is supposed to be known only to the initiated.

- ▣ *DAO* (Divisional Ammunition Officer);
- ▣ *adv.* (advance);
- ▣ *atk.* (attack); *obj.* (object);
- ▣ *A/T* (anti-tank);
- ▣ *ATAS* (Air Transport Auxiliary Service).

The usual parts of the business paper are:

- 1. **Heading.** The heading, which includes the sender's name, postal and telegraphic addresses, telephone number as well as reference titles of the sender and recipient, is printed at the top of the notepaper
- 2. **Date.** The date should always be printed in the top right-hand corner in the order: day, month, year
- 3. **Name and address,** i.e. the inside address or the direction. The inside address is typed in three, four or more lines whichever is necessary, either at the beginning of the letter, or at the end
- 4. **Salutation.** The salutation may be: *Sir, Sirs, Gentlemen* (never 'Gentleman'), *Dear Sirs* (never "Dear Gentlemen), *Madam, Dear Madam* (for both married and unmarried ladies), or *Mesdames* (plural).
- 5. **Reference.** Underlined heading should look as follows: *Re: Your Order No 12345.* *Re* is not an abbreviation of "regarding", but a Latin word meaning "in the matter".

- 6. **Opening.** If you are hesitating for a phrase with which to commence your letter, one of the following will suit your purpose
- 7. **Body.** The body is the subject matter that should be concise but not laconic.
- 8. **Closing** or the complimentary close. It usually looks something like this: *Yours faithfully / truly / sincerely / cordially* (not *respectfully* as it is too servile).
- 9. **Stamp (if any) and signatures.** The closing, with the signature following it, is made to slope off gradually so that the end of the signature just reaches the right hand margin of the letter.
- 10. **Enclosures.** The Word "Enclosure "should be written either in full or in its abbreviated form "Enc." Usually at the bottom left-hand corner of the letter.





Mansfield and Co.
59 High Street

Swanage (=the address of the sender)
14 August, 2006 (=the date)

22 Fleet Street

London (= the address of the party addressed)

Dear Sir, (=salutation)

We beg to inform you that by order and for account of Mr. Jones of Manchester, we have taken the liberty of drawing upon you for \$45 at three months' date to the order of Mr. Sharp. We gladly take this opportunity of placing our services at your disposal, and shall be pleased if you frequently make use of them. (=body)

Truly yours,

Mansfield and Co. (=closing)

by Mary Smith

An official document usually consists of a **preamble**
main text body
a finalizing (concluding) part.



Certificate of American Citizenship

Dear Arizona Law Enforcement Official:

This document certifies that Señor/Señorita _____ is a Completely Legal Resident of the United States, as evidenced by their exhibiting these uniquely American traits:

- Grossly overweight from a daily diet of fat-laden, nutrient-free fast food;
- Is completely up-to-date on all current events (so long as they were covered on TMZ);
- Has never been inside a public library, since there aren't any at the mall;
- Is carrying a staggering amount of personal debt — including a \$150 monthly cell-phone plan, a \$400 monthly cable bill, a 22% credit-card interest rate, and a never-should've-been-approved underwater mortgage;
- Has wholly inadequate healthcare coverage (if any at all);
- At this point, will desperately accept virtually any job available, even at sub-minimum wage, despite holding a master's degree;
- Has not voted in years — excluding *Idol*, of course.

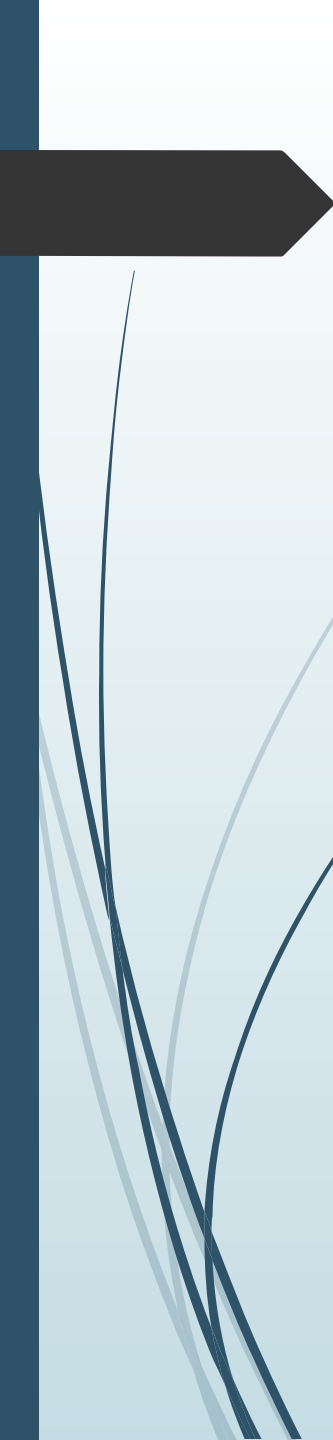
Therefore, Law Enforcement Official, the person carrying these papers is **not** the illegal you're looking for. He/she may go about his/her business. Move along.

Signed,

A. E. N.

Alfred E. Neuman
Arizona Director, Immigration Profiling (A DIP)

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- ❑ **The preamble** is usually a statement at the beginning of the document explaining what it is about and stating the parties of the agreement, e.g. *“The States concluding this Treaty (Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons), hereinafter referred to as the ‘Parties to the Treaty’...have agreed as follows...”*.
 - ❑ **The main text body** constitutes the central and most important part of the document. It consists of articles – individual parts of a document, usually numbered ones, which state the conditions on which the parties reach their agreement. For example, Article I of the above cited Treaty begins: *“Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly...”*
 - ❑ **The finalizing part** comprises the signatures of the duly authorized people that have signed the document; the amount of copies of the document; the date (more often than not, stated by words, not by figures); the place: *“IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, duly authorized, have signed this Treaty.*