

# Stylistic peculiarities of the style of official documents in English



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Official documents are written in a formal, “cold” or matter-of-fact style of speech.

The style of official documents is represented by the following sub-styles, or varieties:

- **the language of business documents**
- **the language of legal documents**
- **the language of diplomacy**
- **the language of military documents**

# Types of official documents:

- 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 aim of communication in this style of language is to reach agreement between two contracting parties.



## Peculiarities of the style:

- A special system of clichés, terms and set expressions:

- ✓ *I beg to inform you;*
- ✓ *I beg to move;*
- ✓ *I second the motion;*
- ✓ *provisional agenda;*
- ✓ *the above-mentioned;*
- ✓ *hereinafter named;*
- ✓ *on behalf of;*
- ✓ *private advisory;*
- ✓ *Dear sir.*

## ● the use of abbreviations, conventional symbols and contractions, e. g.

- MP (Member of Parliament); *Gvt.* (government); *H.M.S.* (Her Majesty's Steamship); \$(dollar); *Ltd* (Limited).
- *DAO* (Divisional Ammunition Officer); *adv.* (advance); *atk.* (attack); *obj.* (object); *A/T* (anti-tank); *ATAS* (Air Transport Auxiliary Service).

**the use of special terms**, e.g. in finance we find terms like *extra revenue; taxable capacities; liability to profit tax.*

Terms and phrases like *high contracting parties; to ratify an agreement; memorandum; pact; protectorate; extra-territorial status; plenipotentiary* will immediately brand the utterance as diplomatic.

In legal language, examples are: *to deal with a case; summary procedure; a body of judges; as laid down in; the succeeding clauses of agreement; to reaffirm faith in fundamental principles; to establish the required conditions; the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law.*

● **the use of 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 endeavour* (=to try); *to proceed* (=to go); *inquire* (to ask).



- **absence of emotiveness,**  
*except: Dear Sir; yours faithfully*



**An official document usually consists of :**

- 1. preamble;**
- 2. main text body;**
- 3. a finalizing (concluding) part;**

# **Definite compositional structure and design:**

- 1. Heading**
- 2. Date**
- 3. Name and address**
- 4. Salutation**
- 5. Reference**
- 6. Opening**
- 7. Body**
- 8. Closing**
- 9. Stamp (if any) and signatures**

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



**Thank you for  
your  
attention!**