GENERAL

how to end a letter

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Introduction

When you finish writing a letter, whether it’s a heartfelt note, a formal business communication, or an email to a friend, the final words you choose can leave a lasting impression. The way you close a letter not only signals the end of your message but also reflects your tone, relationship with the recipient, and cultural awareness. This guide explores the art of ending a letter, offering practical steps, diverse examples, and cultural nuances so you can close every message with confidence and clarity.

Why the Closing Matters

The closing of a letter is more than just a polite formality. It serves several key purposes:

- Signal Completion: It clearly indicates that the letter is finished.
- Reinforce Tone: A closing can amplify the overall mood—professional, friendly, or heartfelt.
- Show Respect: Selecting an appropriate closing demonstrates awareness of the recipient’s expectations.
- Create a Memorable Finish: A well-chosen closing can leave a lasting impression, encouraging a positive response or further engagement.

Types of Letters and Their Closings

Different contexts demand different closings. Below are common letter types and the closings that fit best.

Formal Letters

Formal letters are often used in business, legal, or official communications. They require a courteous, respectful tone.

- Yours sincerely (when you know the recipient’s name)
- Yours faithfully (when you do not know the recipient’s name)
- Respectfully yours
- With best regards

Informal Letters

Informal letters are personal, friendly, or casual. The closing can be warm and relaxed.

- Best wishes
- With love
- Take care
- Cheers

Business Emails

Business emails blend professionalism with efficiency. They often include a quick sign-off and a signature block.

- Thank you
- Regards
- Kind regards

- Best regards
- Looking forward to hearing from you

Personal Emails

Personal emails to friends or family can be more expressive.

- Love
- Hugs
- Talk soon
- See you soon

Common Closing Phrases

Below is a comprehensive list of closing phrases you can adapt to your letter's tone and purpose.

Formal Closing Phrases

- Yours sincerely
- Yours faithfully
- Respectfully yours
- With highest regards
- Respectfully
- With appreciation
- Thank you for your consideration
- With gratitude

Informal Closing Phrases

- Warm regards
- All the best
- Take care
- Until next time
- Cheers
- Hugs
- Love
- See you soon

Business Email Closings

- Regards
- Best regards
- Kind regards
- Thank you
- Sincerely
- Respectfully
- Looking forward to your reply
- Thank you for your time

Personal Email Closings

- Love
- Love you
- Hugs
- Talk soon

- See you soon
- Take care
- Yours truly
- Forever yours

How to End a Letter: Step-by-Step Guide

Follow these steps to craft a closing that feels natural and appropriate.

1. Review Your Letter

Read through your entire letter to ensure the closing aligns with the overall tone. Does the final line feel abrupt or does it flow smoothly?

2. Determine the Tone

Ask yourself: Is this a formal business letter, a friendly note, or an email to a colleague? The tone will dictate the style of your closing.

3. Choose the Right Closing Phrase

Use the lists above as a reference. If you're unsure, opt for a safe, neutral phrase such as "Best regards" or "Yours sincerely."

4. Add a Complimentary Close

In formal letters, include a complimentary close before your signature. Example: "Yours sincerely," or "Respectfully yours," followed by a comma.

5. Sign Your Name

Type or handwrite your name. In email, you might add a digital signature block with your contact details.

6. Verify Formatting

Ensure there is a line break between the closing phrase and your signature. Maintain consistent spacing throughout the letter.

Examples of Letter Closings

Below are sample closings for different scenarios. Use them as templates or inspiration.

Formal Business Letter

Dear Mr. Anderson,
Thank you for your time and consideration regarding our proposal. We look forward to a fruitful partnership.
Yours sincerely,
Jane Doe
Marketing Manager

Informal Letter to a Friend

Hey Sarah,
It was great catching up last weekend! Let's plan another adventure soon.
Take care,
Mike

Business Email to a Client

Hi Laura,
Please find attached the updated contract. Let me know if you have any questions.
Best regards,
Carlos Ramirez
Account Manager

Personal Email to a Family Member

Dear Aunt Lisa,
I’m excited to share that I’ve accepted the internship in New York! I’ll miss our Sunday lunches.
Love,
Emily

Do’s and Don’ts

Following best practices ensures your closing is effective.

Do’s

- Match the closing to the letter’s tone.
- Keep it concise—one line is usually sufficient.
- Proofread for spelling and punctuation.
- Use a comma after the closing phrase in formal letters.
- Include your full name and title if the letter is business-related.

Don’ts

- Don’t use informal slang in a formal letter.
- Avoid overly casual closings in professional contexts.
- Don’t add unnecessary flourish or excessive exclamation points.
- Don’t leave a blank line before the signature; it can look unprofessional.
- Avoid using the same closing for every letter; vary when appropriate.

Cultural Considerations

Letter closings can vary significantly across cultures. Being culturally sensitive can prevent misunderstandings.

Western Cultures

In the United States and much of Europe, “Sincerely” or “Best regards” are common in business letters. Informal closings like “Cheers” or “Take care” are popular in casual communication.

Asian Cultures

Japanese business letters often end with “elQw” (Keigu), meaning “Respectfully.” Chinese business letters may use “kd•ôely<” zhì jìng l • or “Œ(T/” (J à q ’à When writing in English for Asian audiences, consider using “Respectfully” or “With best regards.”

Middle Eastern Cultures

Closes such as “With respect” or “Sincerely” are acceptable. Adding a brief phrase of gratitude, like “Thank you for your time,” can be appreciated.

Latin American Cultures

Formal letters may use “Atentamente” or “Cordialmente.” For informal emails, “Saludos” or “Un abrazo” (a hug) can be appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What if I don’t know the recipient’s name? Use “Yours faithfully” in formal letters and “Regards” or “Best regards” in business emails.
2. Can I use my own unique closing? Yes, as long as it remains professional and clear. Personalize it for informal letters.
3. Do I need to sign a handwritten letter? If it’s a formal or legal document, a handwritten signature is recommended. For most business emails, a digital signature block suffices.
4. Is it okay to use emojis in a closing? Avoid emojis in formal or business letters; they are acceptable in informal emails to friends.
5. Should I include a call to action before closing? In business emails, it’s helpful to add a brief call to action (e.g., “Please let me know your decision by Friday.”) before the closing phrase.

Conclusion

Ending a letter is more than just a formality; it’s a deliberate choice that reflects your professionalism, respect, and relationship with the reader. By understanding the nuances of different letter types, selecting an appropriate closing phrase, and following the step-by-step process outlined above, you can ensure every message ends on a polished, memorable note. Whether you’re drafting a formal proposal, a warm personal note, or a concise business email, mastering the art of the closing will help you communicate with confidence and clarity.

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