Decisions about page format impact the effectiveness of the message. Many companies have policies that dictate the page layout, letter and punctuation style, and other formatting issues. In the absence of company policy, make your format choices from among standard acceptable options illustrated on this style card.

**Page Layout, Punctuation, and Letter Style**

The default margins set by word processing software typically reflect the standard line length to increase the efficiency of producing business correspondence. Letters are balanced on the page with approximately equal margins on all sides of the letter, a placement often referred to as fitting the letter into a picture frame. Short letters (one or two paragraphs) are centered on the page; all other letters begin 2 inches from the top of the page. Side margins may be adjusted to improve the appearance of extremely short letters.

Current word processing software has increased the default line spacing and space between paragraphs for easier on-screen reading. If you prefer the tighter, traditional spacing, simply adjust the line spacing to 1.0. Also, to conserve space but keep the fresh, open look, try reducing the line spacing in the letter address but retain the wider line and paragraph spacing in the body of the letter. Another new default is a crisp, open font such as Calibri (replacing the common Times New Roman) designed for easy reading on monitors.

**New Document Look**

July 24, 2008  **Tap Enter 2 times**

Mr. Bert A. Pittman
1938 South Welch Avenue
Northwood, NE 65432-1938  **Tap Enter 1 time**

Dear Mr. Pittman  **Tap Enter 1 time**

Your recent article, “Are Appraisers Talking to Themselves?” has drawn many favorable comments from local real estate appraisers.  **Tap Enter 1 time**

The Southeast Chapter of the Society of Real Estate Appraisers . . .

**Traditional Spacing**

July 24, 2008  **Tap Enter 4 times (QS)**

Mr. Bert A. Pittman
1938 South Welch Avenue
Northwood, NE 65432-1938  **Tap Enter 2 times (DS)**

Dear Mr. Pittman  **Tap Enter 2 times (DS)**

Your recent article, “Are Appraisers Talking to Themselves?” has drawn many favorable comments from local real estate appraisers.  **Tap Enter 2 times (DS)**

The Southeast Chapter of the Society of Real Estate Appraisers . . .

**Punctuation Styles.** Two punctuation styles are customarily used in business letters: mixed and open. Letters using mixed punctuation style have a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close. Letters using open punctuation style omit a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close. Mixed punctuation is the traditional style; however, efficiency-conscious companies are increasingly adopting the open style (and other similar format changes), which is easier to remember.

**Letter Styles.** Business letters are typically formatted in either block or modified block letter styles. The Sample Letter card has examples of these two styles:

- **Block.** Companies striving to reduce the cost of producing business documents adopt the easy-to-learn, efficient block format. All lines (including paragraphs) begin at the left margin.
• **Modified Block.** Modified block is the traditional letter format still used in many companies. The dateline, complimentary close, and signature block begin at the horizontal center of the page. Paragraphs may be indented one-half inch if the writer prefers or the company policy requires it. However, the indention creates unnecessary keystrokes that increase the production cost. All other lines begin at the left margin.

**Standard Letter Parts**

Professional business letters include seven standard parts. Other parts are optional and may be included when necessary.

1. **Dateline.** When the letterhead shows the company name, address, telephone and/or fax number, and logo, the letter begins with the dateline. Use the month-day-year format (September 2, 2008) for most documents prepared for U.S. audiences. When preparing government documents or writing to an international audience, use the day-month-year format (2 September 2008). Company policy may require another format.

2. **Letter Address.** The *letter address* includes a personal or professional title (e.g., Mr., Ms., or Dr.), the name of the person and company receiving the letter; and the complete address.

3. **Salutation.** The *salutation* is the greeting that opens a letter. To show courtesy for the receiver, include a personal or professional title (for example, Mr., Ms., Dr., Senator). Refer to the first line of the letter address to determine an appropriate salutation. “Dear Ms. Henson” is an appropriate salutation for a letter addressed to Ms. Donna Henson (first line of letter address). “Ladies and Gentlemen” is an appropriate salutation for a letter addressed to “Wyatt Enterprises,” where the company name is keyed as the first line of the letter address.

4. **Body.** The *body* contains the message of the letter. Because extra space separates the paragraphs, paragraph indentation, which requires extra setup time, is not necessary. However, for organizations that require paragraph indentation as company policy, the modified block format with indented paragraphs is the appropriate choice.

5. **Complimentary Close.** The *complimentary close* is a phrase used to close a letter in the same way that you say good-bye at the end of a conversation. To create goodwill, choose a complimentary close that reflects the formality of your relationship with the receiver. Typical examples are “Sincerely,” “Cordially,” and “Respectfully.” Using “yours” in the close has fallen out of popularity (as in “Sincerely yours” and “Very truly yours”). “Sincerely” is considered neutral and is thus appropriate in a majority of business situations. “Cordially” can be used for friendly messages, and “Respectfully” is appropriate when you are submitting information for the approval of another.

6. **Signature Block.** The *signature block* consists of the writer’s name keyed below the complimentary close, allowing space for the writer to sign legibly. A woman may include a courtesy title to indicate her preference (e.g., Miss, Ms., Mrs.), and a woman or man may use a title to distinguish a name used by both men and women (e.g., Shane, Leslie, or Stacy) or initials (E. M. Goodman). A business or professional title may be placed on the same line with the writer’s name or directly below it as appropriate to achieve balance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title on the Same Line</th>
<th>Title on the Next Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Leslie Tatum, President</td>
<td>Ms. E. M. Goodman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perry Watson, Manager</td>
<td>Assistant Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Control Division Head</td>
<td>Richard S. Templeton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resources Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 Reference Initials. The reference initials consist of the keyboard operator’s initials keyed in lowercase below the signature block. The reference initials and the signature block identify the persons involved in preparing a letter in the event of later questions. Reference initials are frequently omitted when a letter is keyed by the writer. However, company policy may require that the initials of all people involved in preparing a letter be placed in the reference initials line to identify accountability in the case of litigation. For example, the following reference initials show the indicated level of responsibility. The reference line might also include department identification or other information as required by the organization.

```
SF:Im:cd
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Person who signed document  Person who wrote document  Person who keyed document

Optional Letter Parts

Delivery and Addressee Notations. A delivery notation provides a record of how a letter was sent. Examples include Air Mail, Certified Mail, Federal Express, Registered Mail, and Fax Transmission. Addressee notations such as Confidential or Personal give instructions on how a letter should be handled.

Attention Line. An attention line is used for directing correspondence to an individual or department within an organization while still officially addressing the letter to the organization. The attention line directs a letter to a specific person (Attention Ms. Laura Ritter), position within a company (Attention Human Resources Director), or department (Attention Purchasing Department). Current practice is to place the attention line in the letter address on the line directly below the company name and use the same format for the envelope address. The appropriate salutation in a letter with an attention line is “Ladies and Gentlemen.”

Reference Line. A reference line (Re: Contract No. 983-9873) directs the receiver to source documents or to files.

Subject Line. A subject line tells the receiver what a letter is about and sets the stage for the receiver to understand the message. For added emphasis, use initial capitals or all capitals, or center the subject line if modified block style is used. Omit the word subject because its position above the body clearly identifies its function.

Second-Page Heading. The second and succeeding pages of multiple-page letters and memorandums are keyed on plain paper of the same quality as the letterhead. Identify the second and succeeding pages with a second-page heading including the name of the addressee, page number, and the date. Place the heading one inch from the top edge of the paper using either a vertical or horizontal format as illustrated. The horizontal format is more time-consuming to format but looks attractive with the modified block format and may prevent the document from requiring additional pages.

Vertical Format

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Communication Systems, Inc.
Page 2
January 19, 2008
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Horizontal Format

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Communication Systems, Inc. 2 January 19, 2008
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Company Name in Signature Block. Some companies prefer to include the company name in the signature block, but often it is excluded because it appears in the letterhead. The company name is beneficial when the letter is prepared on plain paper or is more than one page (the second page of the letter is printed on plain paper). Including the company name also may be useful to the writer wishing to emphasize that the document is written on behalf of the company (e.g., a letter establishing an initial customer contact).

Enclosure Notation. An enclosure notation indicates that additional items (brochure, price list, résumé) are included in the same envelope. Key the plural form (Enclosures) if more than one item is enclosed. You may identify the number of enclosures (Enclosures: 3) or the specific item enclosed (Enclosure: Bid Proposal). Avoid abbreviations (Enc.) that may give the impression that your work is hurried and careless and may show disrespect for the recipient. Some companies use the word “Attachment” on memorandums when the accompanying items may be stapled or clipped and not placed in an envelope.

Copy Notation. A copy notation indicates that a courtesy copy of the document was sent to the person(s) listed. Include the person’s personal or professional title and full name, after keying “c” for copy or “cc” for courtesy copy. Key the copy notation below the enclosure notation, reference initials, or signature block (depending on the optional letter parts used).

Postscript. A postscript, appearing as the last item in a letter, is commonly used to emphasize information. A postscript in a sales letter, for example, is often used to restate the central selling point; for added emphasis, it may be handwritten or printed in a different color. Often handwritten postscripts of a personal nature are added to personalize the printed document. Postscripts should not be used to add information inadvertently omitted from the letter. Because its position clearly labels this paragraph as a postscript, do not begin with “PS.”

Computer File Notation. A computer file notation provides the path and file name of the letter. Some companies require this documentation on the file copy to facilitate revision. Place the computer file notation a single space below the last keyed line of the letter.