

Five-Minute Correspondence Style Guide

Sales letters, proposals, engagement letters, billing reminders, thank-you notes — does the steady stream of letters your clients receive represent you as a cohesive company or disorganized departments? Our Five-Minute Correspondence Style Guide helps you keep it consistent.

1. Published Stylebook + Preferred Dictionary

Take a style shortcut with a published stylebook. Mark the page with your preferred correspondence style and you're done! While you're at it, select a preferred dictionary to end debates about spelling.

Often choosing a stylebook and dictionary comes down to what's already available in your office. For correspondence, we like Franklin Covey's full-page examples, detailed instructions and workarounds.

Examples

Franklin Covey Style Guide for Business and Technical Communication

The Gregg Reference Manual: A Manual of Style, Grammar, Usage, and Formatting

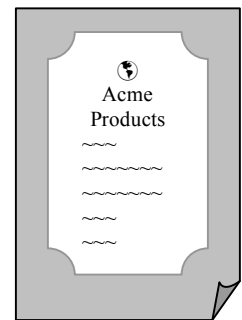
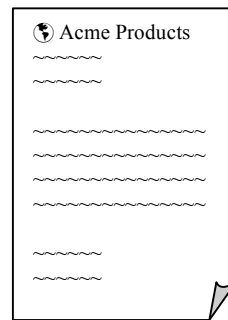
Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition

Stylebook: _____ Dictionary: _____

2. Margins

If your company already has letterhead (either printed or electronic), the design will drive the space needed at the top and bottom. Align your side margins with the edges of the design elements, too.

Margins offer space for page numbers and notes and protect your text from wear and tear. Huge margins make it difficult to fit anything on a single page, though, so strike the right balance for your letters.

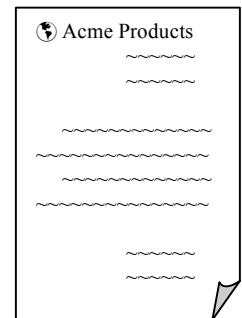
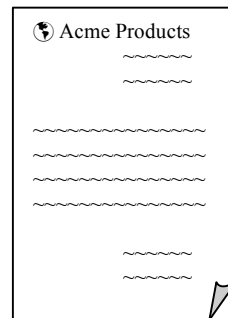


Top: _____ Bottom: _____ Left: _____ Right: _____

3. Layout

Do you use block, modified block or semi-block layout for your correspondence? Block's flush left alignment is easiest to explain and enforce.

If your brand is more traditional, you may prefer modified block, with the date and signature lines indented, or semi-block, which slightly indents the first line of each paragraph as well.



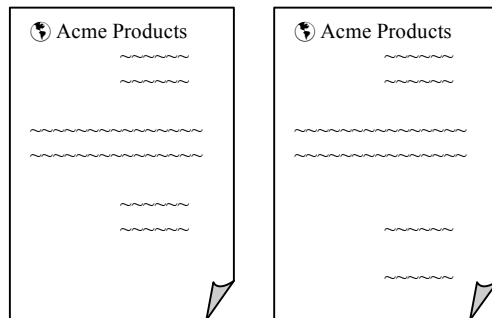
Block Modified Block Semi-Block Indentation: _____

4. Spacing

Every style guide specifies slightly different spacing after the date, address, greeting, body and close. Do you use one space, two, three or a combination?

Consider how much vertical space your signature requires and whether you'll frequently have additional lines referencing the subject, order number, attachments, enclosures or typists.

Example Styles



Between Date and Address: _____ Between Address and Greeting: _____

Between Greeting and Body: _____ Between Body and Close: _____

Between Close and Signature: _____ Additional Spacing: _____

5. Typeface + Size

Typefaces with serifs are easiest to read in large blocks of text. Select one that matches your brand, but consider licensing costs and installation time before straying from your computers' default faces.

For letters, 11- or 12-point type is acceptable, but settle on one size or you'll be tempted to stretch to 14-point or squeeze to 9-point to fit the page.

- 11-point Book Antiqua
- 12-point Book Antiqua

- 11-point Georgia
- 12-point Georgia

- 11-point Times
- 12-point Times

Typeface: _____ Size: _____

Consonant Inc.

Consonant writes copy and content using 360° research and proven marketing techniques to deliver healthy returns on clients' marketing investments. Working with startups and emerging businesses, Consonant adeptly delivers high-ROI copy and content within limited budgets. Every project begins with thorough research before copy is written, proofread and published on the Web, via email or in a print-ready PDF — or turned over to a designer for layout. Call 312.316.6508 or email Talent@ConsonantInc.com for a free consultation.