

## HOW TO CONVEY BAD NEWS

# 4

This unit is designed to help you develop the language skill for writing letters conveying basically bad news. The exercises and information given in this unit will increase your abilities to:

- write letters conveying death news, or sympathetic attitude
- write letters refusing all sorts of proposals, claims, or refusing application for jobs.

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## UNIT-4

### Lesson-1: Introduction to Writing Bad News Letters

After you have read this lesson you will be able to:

- apply guidelines for writing all sorts of bad news letter
- use right language for writing claim letters of both routine and arguable types.

#### ***General guidelines for writing letters conveying bad news***

It is very easy to choose language for conveying good news to anybody but you should take enough time in constructing your sentences while conveying bad news to some one, be it a death news or a refusal to any request or job application letter.

In conveying bad news in letter form or in any form of report, you must use the indirect plan especially, when you expect your readers to disapprove or to need persuading. Also while in business you may have to refuse an order, or a request for products information. For example, suppose, you do not have a particular product, or you do not intend to sell it to individual customer but only to retailers or distributors, in all these situations you need to write using indirect plan. The indirect plan sometimes make readers more tolerant of bad news or more receptive to your arguments. The rule is very simple; just give explanation before you state the decision or refusal.

#### **Example**

If you intend to announce the raised prices of the essential commodities of your company, you must first explain to your readers why the prices have gone up, either for inflation, or shortage of supply, due to transport problem, or natural calamities, etc., and then you gently break the news of the increased prices you are asking from your customers. In doing so you should be honest and sincere in explaining the reasons behind your decision. In writing letters always convey a tone that helps readers understand how you feel about their needs. **Be natural and empathise with your readers i.e., place yourself into your readers position and think about their needs.**

Also after giving the bad news try to give alternative suggestion or compromise if possible. For example, instead of refusing a favour outright, try to suggest someone to whom the readers may turn:

I will have to be out of the city on November 29, but my private secretary who is an excellent listener and communicator will be around.

Also in reporting error, or bad news, aim for maximum clear expression and sincerity to retain the readers' goodwill.



*The indirect approach sometimes make readers more tolerant of bad news or more receptive to your arguments.*

*just give explanation before you state the decision or refusal.*

*In reporting errors, or bad news, or refusal to any claim, favour, request, use the indirect plan i.e., giving your readers the explanations for the refusal first and then announce the refusal.*



#### ACTIVITY-1

1. What do you mean by an indirect plan?
2. Which one of the two sentences below should you select for informing your customer about a bill that he has not paid?
  - A. *You have not paid your bill.*
  - B. *This bill has not been paid.*

#### ***Claim Letters***

Claim letters are usually of two types; either they complain about unfair treatment, poor policies, etc., or request adjustment for defective goods, or poor services, or the like. Suppose as a sales manager you have to answer to the claim letters of your company's customers. Sometimes you are adjusting to the claims asked for, and sometimes you are forced to write a letter saying no to the request, or settle the refund, or repair the purchased item. In all these situation saying 'no' should be conveyed very carefully without offending the readers' point of view. Pay special attention in helping the readers understand the reasons for your decision by writing in indirect plan i.e., explain the reasons for refusal clearly, and then announce your refusal. End with suggestion for resale, future orders, or service if you have any, otherwise end positively by reflecting a tone in your expression as follows:

- a. **Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.**
- b. **We appreciate your interest in our product.**

**Example of a claim letter writing 'No'**

**ELITE FLOORS  
36, Green Road  
Dhaka**

**July 2, 1995**

Mr. Mazharul Hasan  
75, Uttara Model Town  
Sector - 3, Uttara  
Dhaka

Dear Mr. Hasan,

I do feel that it is very frustrating when a purchased product appears to be defective especially, the one costing you a large sum of money. That is why we at Elite Floors make it a policy to respond to all questions and claims from the customers. When we received your letter stating your floor discolouration, we sent our representative immediately to have a look.

After careful inspection, our representative found the discoloration to be confined to the busy areas, such as in front of the main door and the door and passage area leading to the kitchen (used by Maids/House boy most often). He also noticed a similar discolouration on the carpet going out the front main door. When he tried to look for a possible source of staining, he discovered that your driveway had recently been covered with an asphalt driveway sealer.

With the staining only in the busy (mostly used) areas and on the front stairs carpet, it appears that the driveway sealer was in fact tracked into the house and caused discolouration of your floor. As a petroleum based product, drive way sealer will stain any vinyl-surfaced floor.

*Continued to next page*

*Mr. Hasan 2/7/95 Page-2*

I am sure the information that you got from our representative on using solvents, and other clearing agents will help you return some of the original colour to your floor. Staining is not covered under Elite Floors, if there is any other way we can be of help to you, please let us know.

Sincerely,

(SURAIYA ZAFAR)  
for Elite Floors

SZ/tz



#### **ACTIVITY-2**

Write a letter conveying 'no' to a claim made by one of your company's customer who recently bought your new floor tiles and asking for replacement as some of the tiles he found cracked inside.

#### ***Letter of Complaint***

In such letters, it is very important to remain calm. Appeal for the readers honour and fair play. Explain clearly what is wrong. If you make specific allegations support them with proof. State clearly the extent of your inconvenience or loss, lastly, indicate what kind of adjustment you would consider fair. Take the following sample letter as a model only and use your own judgement in expressing your complain. Notice, how the writer uses a tactful, reasonable tone, and indirect plan to achieve his goal in the next page.

**GEMINI SISTERS**

**&  
BROTHERS LTD.  
19, New Dhalia Avenue  
Dhaka**

18, June 1995

Melta Furnishings Limited  
Kamal Ataturk Avenue  
Banani, Dhaka

Re. 5 7WP

Dear Sirs,

Order No. 0021

When the above order was placed, your representative, Mr. Saiful assured us that the goods would be delivered within three weeks. It is now four weeks but we have not received our delivery, and we already have had several complaints from customers.

Unfortunately, this is not the first occasion on which we have had cause to complain about delay in deliveries from you. Unless, delivery dates are promptly met in future, we shall consider ceasing to stock Melta Furnishings Limited.

Yours faithfully,

R. K. Raihan  
Sales Manager

RK/pc

Use the indirect plan in writing bad news letter as it helps reader to become more tolerant of bad news and receptive to your bad news, or arguments.

### **ACTIVITY-3**

Write a complaint letter about a problem you have had with goods or service. State your case clearly and objectively and request a specific adjustment.

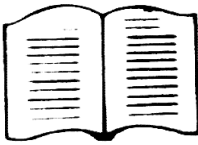


## **Lesson-2: Letters Conveying Bad News, Sympathy, and Refusing Appointments to Jobs.**

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- follow the guidelines in choosing language for writing letters conveying sympathy
- write letters refusing offers to appointments for jobs
- apply the sample letters as perfect models for writing various letters.

### ***Letter of Sympathy***



As a professional person you will have to convey sympathies to your company's customers, and associates in situation involving death, sickness, accidents, serious loss, or other mishaps. This kind of information requires special attention in its construction because it will work as counselling to give comfort to your readers. So, identify the event and express your sympathy directly. In case of a death, show your deep concern about the good qualities of the deceased, and how these will be cherished by you. Next, offer any help that the readers might need anytime. Below is a letter conveying sympathy by a company chief who extends his deep desire to help too. He is writing on behalf of the company reflecting formal remarks and expressions.

*(A sample letter of sympathy is given on the following page)*



**DESH BOUND**

**June 5, 1995**

Nillie Rahman  
236, New DOHS  
Mohakhali, Dhaka

Dear Mrs. Rahman,

All of us were in deep shock the moment we heard of Safiq's sudden premature death. We extend our deepest sympathy to you.

Safiq's value to us as an employee went beyond his expertise as an Architect though he was among the very best we have known. His wisdom, patience, and accommodative nature, friendly appearance made him many friends.

We shall always remember Shafiq as a diligent valuable man. We hope we can comfort you with our feelings for him. Should you need any help please don't hesitate to give us a call.

Sincerely yours,

**SHARIER SHARIF**  
**Managing Director**

SS/pk

*Central message:  
Empathise yourself  
with the reader, try  
to feel his situation  
as you would yours.*

**ACTIVITY-1**

Write a letter conveying sympathy to your colleague's mother whose son died of a heart attack.



***Refusing offers to job application letter (Regret letter)***

Although it falls under the group of bad news letter decisions about appointments should never be stated indirectly, as it may cause misunderstanding between the writer, and the reader. Also, you should be honest and sincere in explaining the reasons behind your decision.

Emphasise the positive attitude i.e., what you can do, or are doing, and avoid negative statements such as;

'We cannot employ anymore,'

'We are unable to appoint you,' also a statement like, 'we are sorry,' while you are giving your decision as a 'No' to an application letter for jobs. Below is a sample letter written by

School of Business

the Director of a company expressing refusal to the application letter of an applicant

A sample letter writing 'no' to an application letter for job.

**PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT  
BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL AGENCY (BIDA)  
House-6, Road-29, Baridhara, Dhaka**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

August 5, 1995

Ms. Jarina Choudhury  
C/O, Mr. A. H. Choudhury  
House-9, Road-19, Sector-5  
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

Dear Ms. Choudhury,

Thank you for applying for the position of Programme Co-ordinator, and taking the time to come for interview. I regret to inform you that another candidate has been selected for the contract negotiation.

We do appreciate your interest to work for us and shall keep your C.V. for future reference.

Yours truly,

ASIF AHMED  
Director Personnel

### **Resignation**

Resignation letters are always written on official basis and are simple in nature stating the facts. Below is a sample of a resignation letter.

House No. 366  
Road No. 59  
New DOHS  
Dhaka

August 30, 1995

The Personnel Manager  
Ghar Boshoti Limited  
Gulshan-1  
Dhaka

Dear Sir,

I have been offered a post of Assistant Secretary with BTL Limited and therefore, wish to resign from my present position.

I should like to say that, I shall in many ways be reluctant to leave this firm. I have enjoyed working here and am particularly grateful for the opportunity I was given to attend Management Training Program on day-release. However, as the new post involves more responsible duties together with an increase in salary, I am confident you will understand my motives for accepting the offer.

As BTL Limited would like me to start work with them as soon as possible, I hope it will be convenient for me to leave at the end of next month.

Yours faithfully,

MOHAMMAD ABU ZAFAR PATWARY

AZP/ym

xc: Director General

When you sympathise with a person you in fact place yourself into that person's position. And that's how you adjust your message (of condolence and refusal to offers) into that person's level of understanding and receptive abilities.



#### **ACTIVITY-2**

These questions are designed to help you assess how far you have understood and can apply the learning you have accomplished by answering (in written form) the following questions:

- I. Write a stereo-typed letter of regret to a candidate who has applied for the post advertised in the daily news on behalf of your company. (Answer : The sample letter No. 1)
- II. You have been employed for five years by your present company as a Private Secretary in a post which you have enjoyed and where you have been given training facilities but now you wish to resign. Write your formal letter of resignation to your employer (In your letter give reasons for your resignation).
- III. Write a formal letter expressing sympathy to the wife of your subordinate officer who recently died of a road accident. Write on behalf of your company.