

Writing an Effective Appeal or Request Letter

Many university policies require a written appeal letter. A letter is sometimes the most effective way to detail extenuating circumstances resulting in a denial admission. Each school has a formal appeal process which must be followed. Emails or phone calls will not serve as a formal appeal or change of status. Some schools such as SDSU have a template that must be followed. Include only documents or letters that confirm your circumstances not endorsements of character or need.

FORMAT

Elements: The elements found in typical business letters are:

- a. full mailing address of the sender
- b. Campus ID if one given by the admission office
- c. date on which letter is written
- d. address of person to whom letter is addressed
- e. subject line
- f. salutation
- g. body (the main message)
- h. complimentary closing
- i. signature line (be sure to sign your letter)
- j. enclosure and copy notations

Model Letter: The model below uses all the elements from the list. The above layout is a matter of personal choice, include a phone number and email address.

Note: the text of the model letter is exceptionally brief. Most appeal and request letters should be brief and to the point allowing the writer to provide a detailed explanation of facts related to reasons for denial.

- a. Samuel Student
123 ABC Street
San Diego, CA 92120
samuelstudent@email.com
(619) 555-1234
 - b. Campus ID number
 - c. February 20, 2002
 - d. Dr. Jane Skool, Professor
College of _____
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA 92182+mail code
 - e. Subject: Request for Examination
 - f. Dear Dr. Skool:
 - g. I'm writing to appeal
 - h. Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. Please contact me by Email or phone if you have any questions.
 - i. Respectfully
Samuel Student
 - j. Encl.
- Cc: John O. Smith

CONTENT AND TONE: While the appearance of a letter is important, the content and tone will determine whether the letter really does its job. Review any relevant policy and pay particular attention to what the decision maker needs to know to consider an appeal or request. That is the information which should be included in your letter.

Opening Statement: The first sentence or two should state the purpose of the letter clearly. I am writing to appeal ...

Be Factual: Include factual detail but avoid dramatizing the situation.

In late October I was diagnosed with tonsillitis. I was sick for over a week, and missed most of my mid-term exams.

NOT: In late October after feeling really sick for a few days I finally dragged myself to Student Health Services...

Be Specific: If an appeal or request depends on particular facts which the decision maker will want to verify, be specific.

I missed a test January 23, because I flew to Vancouver on January 19 for my grandfather's funeral and returned only January 26. I enclose the airline receipt and can provide further corroboration if that would be helpful.

NOT: I had to attend a funeral out of town so I missed the test on January 23.

Documentation: Include any documentation required by policy or needed to substantiate your claims. If documentation is being sent by a third party, state that with details.

Dr. Well, my father's physician, has agreed to write to you about this matter...

Stick to the Point: Don't clutter your letter with information or requests that have no essential connection to the main message.

Do Not Try to Manipulate the Reader: Threatening, cajoling, begging, pleading, flattery and making extravagant promises are manipulative and usually ineffective methods.

If you give me a chance to come back to residence next year, I promise to work really hard, get rich, and donate a million dollars to the University...

How to Talk About Feelings: It is tempting to overstate the case when something is important to us. When feelings are a legitimate part of a message own the feeling, and state it as a fact.

When I saw my grade, I was very disappointed.

Be Brief: It is more work to write a good short letter than a long one. Busy decision makers appreciate the extra effort.

Proof read and Avoid errors: A letter will make a better impression if it is typed; free of spelling and grammar mistakes; free of slang; and placed in the right sized envelope. BUT it is much more important to *meet deadlines* and *state the purpose clearly* than to submit a letter which is completely error-free.

Keep Copies: Until a matter is settled, keep copies of all letters sent or received, as well as relevant documents and forms.

**Adapted from The University of Western Ontario Ombuds Office, Frances Bauer, Ombudsperson*

This information was obtained from SDSU website.

<http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/ombuds/writingappeal.html>