**Thinking Independently – Business Letter**

 How do you think? Are you an independent thinker or do you follow someone else’s way of thinking? You are going to be neatly hand writing a letter to your future self (1 page front and back) explaining what kind of a thinker you are now and what you hope to be by the time you are a senior in high school. Reread the section “*Thinking Independently*” on the back of the handout and identify 2 characteristics that describe the way you think now. Copy down those characteristics and using personal specific examples explain how you show those characteristics in your thinking. Next, you will identify 2 characteristics from the section that you would like to acquire or improve and using specific examples explain how those characteristics would benefit or help your thinking. Lastly, you will explain if you think you are an independent thinker, based on the “*Thinking Independently*” section.

**Your essay should include the following:**

* Your address, the address of the recipient, the date, and letter heading: salutation and end notations.
* 2 characteristics from the section that you possess **(give specific examples as proof).**
* 2 characteristics from the section that you would like to acquire or improve on **(explain why you would like to acquire or improve the characteristics that you mention).**
* Whether or not you believe you are an independent thinker **(explain why you believe what you do).**

**Due Date:**

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***Thinking Independently***

 Principle: Critical thinking is independent thinking, thinking for oneself. Many of our beliefs are acquired at an early age, when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are praised or rewarded for believing). Critical thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and reject beliefs that are irrational.

 In forming new beliefs, critical thinkers do not passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they try to figure things out for themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of genuine authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another.

 If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that used by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

 Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes and they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

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**Assignment Notes: Discuss the purpose and format of a business letter**

Business letters have a formal layout and specific style. A business letter is often the first step when applying for something important like a job or a scholarship. You need to communicate information about your strengths, your experience, and your interests in a clear way. A business letter is really just an essay disguised letter’s clothing. This means that the context of the letter will have the parts of an essay: introduction, body, and a conclusion.

***Heading***

If you are using letterhead stationery, include only the date two lines below the bottom of the letterhead. Spell out the name of month.

If you are not using letterhead stationery, begin with your full address (city, street, and zip code) 1 to 1½ inches from the top of the page. Spell out address designations, such as *Street*, *Avenue*, and *West*. The state name may be abbreviated using the two-letter, all-capitals U.S. Postal Service designations. Include the date aligned at left with the address, spelling out the name of the month.

***Recipient's Address***

Two to four lines below the date, place the following items:

* The recipient's title (such as *Mr.*, *Ms.*, or *Dr.*) and full name (address a woman who does not have a professional title as *Ms.* unless you know she prefers *Miss* or *Mrs.*; if the recipient does not have a title and you are unsure of his or her gender, omit the title).
* The recipient's job title, if appropriate.
* The name of the company or institution, if appropriate.
* The full address, following the same format as for the address in the heading.

The recipient's address is always aligned on the left margin.

***Salutation***

Place the salutation two lines below the recipient's address. The salutation begins with the word *Dear*, continues with the recipient's title and last name, and ends with a [colon](http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/colon.htm). If you are unsure of the recipient's gender and the recipient does not have a professional title, omit the title and, instead, use both the first and the last names in the salutation (*Dear Leslie Perelman:*). If you do not know the name of the recipient of the letter, refer to the department you are writing to (*Dear Technical Support:*). Avoid salutations such as *Dear Sir or Madam:*.

***Body***

Start the letter two lines after the salutation. Body paragraphs should be single spaced with a double space between paragraphs. (Indenting the first line of each paragraph is acceptable but is more informal than the unindented style.)

Be [concise](http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/concise.htm), direct, and considerate. State the letter's purpose in the opening paragraph. Include supporting information in a middle paragraph or two, and conclude your letter with a brief paragraph that both establishes goodwill and expresses what needs to be done next.

If a letter requires more than one page, make sure there are at least two lines of body text on the final page. Never use an entire page for just the closing. The second page and all subsequent pages must include a heading with the recipient's name, the date, and the page number.

***Closing Phrase***

Write a complimentary closing phrase two lines below the final body paragraph. *Yours truly,* *Sincerely,* or *Sincerely yours* are common endings for professional letters. [Capitalize](http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/capitals.htm) the first letter of the first word of your complimentary closing, and end the complimentary closing with a [comma](http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/commas.htm).

Four lines below the closing phrase, write your full name. If you are writing in an official capacity that is not included in the stationery's letterhead, write your title on the next line. Your signature goes above your typed name.

***End Notations***

At the bottom of the last page of a business letter, end notations may show who typed the letter, whether any materials are enclosed with the letter, and who is receiving a copy of the letter.

The typist's initials, in lowercase letters, follow the initials of the author, in capital letters, and a colon or a front-slash (*LCP:ecb* or *LCP/ecb*).

An enclosure notation--*Enclosure:*, *Encl.*, or *Enc.*--alerts the recipient that additional material (such as a [résumé](http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/resume.htm) or a technical article) is included with the letter. You can either identify the enclosure or indicate how many pieces there are.

Enclosure: Article by I. W. Waitz

Encl. (2)

Enc. (2)

In addition to the enclosure notation, always refer to your enclosures explicitly within the text of the letter.

A copy notation (*cc:*) lets the recipient of the letter know who else is receiving a copy. Put each recipient of a copy on a separate line.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| cc: | Dr. Maria Lopez  |
|  | Mr. William Astley  |