

ENGLISH 3774: ASSIGNMENT SHEET

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE PORTFOLIO

ENGL 3774: 92852
Pamplin Hall 2001, 9:30-10:45
Fall Semester 2010
Mr. Gogan
Email: Brian.Gogan@vt.edu

Office: Shanks Hall 340B
Office Hours: TBD
T/TH & by appointment
Office Phone: 540-231-2831
Home Phone: 414-217-5877

Business Correspondence Portfolio

Due: 10/05 or 10/07

For this assignment, you will write and send a total of nine business letters to actual companies with the goal of receiving as many replies as possible (Due to the prevalence of online customer correspondence forms, these letters might more accurately be described as emails. For clarity, this assignment sheet will refer to these correspondences as letters). You will also deliver three of these letters to an English 3774 peer. In turn, you will receive and reply to three of your peer's correspondences. Finally, you will give a presentation on your findings.

Purpose

- To practice writing well-crafted business correspondences.
- To comparatively assess rhetorical moves across a variety of business correspondences.
- To synthesize your ideas about writing business correspondences.

The Letters

Original 3 Letters (Due: 8/31)

The first step of this assignment is to select three companies whose products you come into contact with daily. These companies and products should be significantly different. So, instead of selecting a pair of running shoes from Nike, Adidas, and Asics, you'd want to select a pair of running shoes from Asics, an Ipod Nano from Apple, and a t-shirt from American Apparel. Consider the following questions when you're making your selection:

- How different are these companies?
- How different are these products?
- How do I use these products?

You will then draw from your experience with these three companies and their products, in order to craft three purposeful letters. Think of each individual letter as falling on spectrum that ranges from complaints to compliments. So, if my favorite clothing store is American Apparel, but I bought a defective t-shirt from them online, my letter might mix compliments and complaints before requesting an exchange. Consider the following questions when you are determining your purpose:

- What is my purpose in writing this letter?
- What do I like about this product?
- What do I dislike about this product?
- What type of response do I want from the company?

You will then draw from our in-class discussions and our textbook readings, write your three letters, and prepare for an in-class peer review on August 31st.

Peer Review Session for Original 3 Letters (8/31)

Peer review enhances your ability to develop a reader-centered approach to business writing by providing you with direct reader feedback on your writing. For this peer review session, you should: (1) draft your three original letters and upload a copy of each letter to scholar; (2) download the business letter peer review sheet from SS; and, (3) bring your laptop computer, with downloaded files, to class on peer review day. That way, you and your peers may respond to one another in writing in terms of the assignment objectives (as stated on the peer review sheet).

Remember: The decision for what to change and what to keep in your draft is yours.

Note: To participate and receive peer review points, you must attend the peer review session having uploaded a **complete** draft of your letters and you must ensure that your computer has internet access in our class room; points will be awarded on the depth of your responses.

Multiplied 9 Letters (Due 9/02)

In order to ensure that you receive replies to your letters from actual businesses, you will effectively “multiply” your original set of three letters by selecting two related companies and products for each of the original letters. You do not need to have had experience with these additional companies and products. You should, however, refer to this portfolio’s presentation and consider the differences you’d like to examine in that paper. The goal here is to make only **minimal changes** to your original three letters.

For example, I might modify my letter to American Apparel by choosing a similar t-shirt from Urban Outfitters and a similar t-shirt from J-Crew, even if I’ve never bought anything from J-Crew. Then, I would copy and save (ie. “save as”) my original American Apparel letter as two new files. I’d open one file and alter the specifics of the letter (company name, product name, company address, contact person, product description, etc.), so that it applies to the Urban Outfitter’s t-shirt. I’d do the same to the remaining file for the J-Crew t-shirt. Then I’d repeat the entire process for the two remaining original letters.

On September 2nd, you will arrive at class having done the following:

- Printed and signed copies of each of the 9 letters.
- Secured 9 unsealed envelopes with postage, and addressed each envelope to each respective company with your address as the return address.
- Uploaded all nine letter to scholar, clearly marking the three original letters in the file name.

You will stuff each envelope with the matching letter, sealed these envelopes, and then hand the stuffed and sealed envelopes to me. Should your company receive correspondences using an online form, you will submit your online correspondences during class—Do not bring envelopes or postage for those companies that require online correspondence. An assigned peer will access a copy of each letter for the peer reply portion of the assignment.

Grading Criteria

1. How effectively does each letter adopt a “you-attitude”?
2. How well does each letter exhibit cultural respect?
3. How effectively does each letter organize main points?
4. How well does each letter supply explanatory information?
5. How effective is each letter’s concision?
6. How well does each letter adhere to formatting conventions?

7. When appropriate, how well does each letter employ headings, lists, and graphics?
8. How effective are the writer's choices about punctuation, grammar, and usage?

The Peer Reply

(Due: 9/09)

You will download a set of nine letters from a peer in English 3774. Three of these letters will be marked as that peer's original letters. You will then write replies to each of your peer's original three letters. You should assume the persona of the company representative to whom your peer addressed the letter. If necessary, you should conduct research (a quick internet search should suffice) about the company, the product, or the issue in order to respond to sufficiently your peer's letter.

You will deliver these three replies to your peer on September 9th.

Grading Criteria

1. How effectively does each reply adopt a "you-attitude"?
2. How well does each reply exhibit cultural respect?
3. How effectively does each reply organize main points?
4. How well does each reply supply explanatory information?
5. How effective is each reply's concision?
6. How well does each reply adhere to formatting conventions?
7. When appropriate, how well does each reply employ headings, lists, and graphics?
8. How effective are the writer's choices about punctuation, grammar, and usage?

The Presentation

(Due 10/05 or 10/07)

To begin this presentation, you should "read across" the letters which you have written, as well as the replies which you have received. In other words, you should assess the similarities and differences among the letters. You may look at a number of different relationships among the letters, but, as a starting place, consider the many ways that the information on this chart could be grouped:

Letters	Peer Reply	Company Reply
Original Letter 1		
Multiplied Letter 1A		
Multiplied Letter 1B		
Original Letter 2		
Multiplied Letter 2A		
Multiplied Letter 2B		
Original Letter 3		
Multiplied Letter 3A		
Multiplied Letter 3B		

Your presentation should concentrate on only a few of the most interesting and most cohesive groupings. You should detail and evaluate a few very specific characteristics among these grouping of letters. Consider the following questions as starting points for your evaluation (Do not merely answer these questions):

- How similar are certain rhetorical approaches among related companies? What reasons could I supply for these similarities?
- How similar are certain rhetorical approaches among related products? What reasons could I supply for these similarities?
- How different are the replies from unrelated companies? How can I justify my observation?
- How different are the replies about unrelated products? How can I justify my observation?
- What distinguishing features do I notice when I consider the reply I received from my peer in relation to the reply that I received from the company?
- What effect does a specific grouping of letters have upon my feelings as a customer?
- Did certain parts of my original letter seem to carry through to the replies? How can I explain this occurrence?
- What trends do I notice among the replies?
- What surprised me?

After considering the relationships among groups of correspondences, develop some strong claims and identify detailed evidence from the correspondences which supports your claims. Organize your presentation as you see fit.

Audience

- Your classmates
- Your teacher

Format

- 6 minute presentation
- 1-2 page handout that articulates your findings and shows supporting evidence

Grading Criteria

Content

1. How clear were the presenter's main claims or findings?
2. How well were these main claims supported with detailed evidence from the correspondences?

Organization

3. How effective was the presentation's structure?

Delivery

4. How well did the presenter make eye contact with the audience?
5. How effective was the presenter's volume?

Full Portfolio Checklist

- ___ 3 Original Letters
- ___ 6 Multiplied Letters
- ___ 3 Replies to Your Letters, Written by a Peer
- ___ 3 Replies to a Peer's Letters, Written by You
- ___ All Received Company Replies
- ___ 1 Presentation Handout