



Writing to Your Post of Assignment

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SUMMARY:

Learn how to write the introductory letter to the Ambassador at your new post.

CATEGORIES:

Mail
Preparing for Your Post
Foreign Affairs Lifestyle

INTERNET:

<http://go.usa.gov/cC8vR>

INTRANET:

<http://snip.state.gov/cq0>

Who Receives Your Formal Letter(s)?

When you are posted to a U.S. mission abroad, it is customary to write to the principal officer to express your pleasure with obtaining the assignment. This letter should arrive no earlier than six weeks before your arrival. If you are assigned to a consulate, it is routine to send a courtesy letter to the country's ambassador. Be sure to confirm all names and titles with your area technician. If time is short, consider sending an e-mail copy of the letter to the ambassador's OMS to process the hard copy letter that you are mailing.

Official State Department stationery/envelopes available at:

Harry S. Truman (Main State)

2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

- The Employee Services Center in Room 1252 (Foreign Service Lounge)*

George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (FSI)

4000 Arlington Boulevard (SA-42)
Arlington, VA 22204

- The Overseas Briefing Center in Room E-2126*
- The Orientation Division in Room F-2315 *
- The Registrar's Office in Room F-1245

**Computers available*

For additional available computers, consult with the Registrar's Office.

Guidance for Letter to Principal Officer

This letter fulfills courtesy requirements, lets the principal officer know your arrival date, and informs them of your contact with the management counselor. Most importantly, it reveals something of who you are. In most cases, it will be your introduction to this person. A workable length is three paragraphs.

How to Address Officers

Ambassador (Male):

Title: The Honorable Charles W. Anderson

Salutation: Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Ambassador (Female):

Title: The Honorable Kathleen S. Holden

Salutation: Dear Madam Ambassador:

Chargé d’Affaires

Title: Ms. Denise W. Williams
Chargé d’Affaires

Salutation: Dear Ms. Williams:

(“Chargé d’Affaires ad interim” should be used if the post is only temporarily without an ambassador.)

Consul General

Title: Mr. Douglas E. Carter
Consul General

Salutation: Dear Mr. Carter:

Consul

Title: Ms. Mary J. Bryant
Consul

Salutation: Dear Ms. Bryant:

What Should I Write About?

Paragraph 1

Introduce yourself and express pleasure at your assignment.

Paragraph 2

Relate some relevant details about your background and experience. Be highly selective. Fluency in the language of the country should be noted, but if you want to improve your language skills, keep that to yourself. Mention family and any specific skills they have that may be useful to the mission, for example: “My husband, Greg is fluent in Spanish from Peace Corps days, and he is qualified to teach ESL.”

Paragraph 3

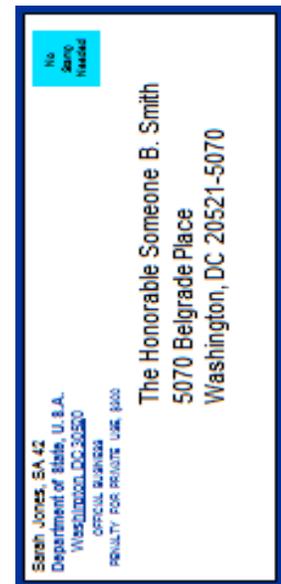
Say when you expect to arrive. Express something of your intention to serve. Close with a pleasantry. (You may choose to place the closing in a fourth paragraph).

What NOT to Say

- Your letter should not exceed one page in length.
- Do not lobby for another job. (Example: “As an unconded junior officer on a consular tour, I am hoping to do a lot of economic reporting as well.”)
- Do not drop names. (Example: “I went to Choate with your son Kenneth.”) Reveal these personal connections only in person.
- Do not say what you expect the job to do for you. (Example: “I am happy to be posted to Kathmandu because I’ll have time to finish my dissertation.”) Your superiors are probably only interested in what you are going to do for the mission.
- Do not write anything that you do not want to be public knowledge.
- Be mindful of the tone of your writing.
- Check format, grammar, and spelling.

How to Print an Envelope Using Microsoft Word

- Open your completed letter to the ambassador.
- Click on the **MAILINGS** tab at the top of the page.
- Click on the **ENVELOPES** tab, located on the left.
- A window will appear with your delivery address already added.
- The **OMIT** box should be checked for the return address.
- Load your envelope into the printer by opening the drop-down drawer in the middle of the printer. There will be a slot to place it; align the sliders to fit the envelope.
- Make sure the State Department address is face side up and the return address is closest to you.
- Press PRINT from the window, not from the screen.
- Once it is printed, handwrite “Your Name, SA-42” in the top left-hand corner above the Department of State return address.
- Deliver the letter to the FSI Mailroom F 1327. No postage is necessary.



(Insert envelope this way)

How to Send by Pouch or via APO/FPO:

Letters may be sent through the interdepartmental correspondence system from any annex or office in the Department of State if you use a State Department return address. If you are a member of an A-100 class or other orientation class, your return address at NFATC is:

(Your Name), Registrar’s Office, Room F-1245 (SA-42)

If you use the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center for your return address on the envelope and expect a reply, use an actual address where you can be contacted up until your time of departure on the *inside* of the envelope.

Format of official pouch address or APO/FPO address:

The Honorable John D. Smith
7050 Baku Place
Washington, DC 20521-7050

Ms. Charlotte Evans
Deputy Chief of Mission
2430 Nouakchott Place
Washington, DC 20521-2430

Mr. /Ms. Someone Evans
Unit XXXX, Box YYYY
APO, AE 09080-YYYY
(Never add embassy name, official
title, or country on APO mail)
The FSI mailroom will not mail postage free, if using
this address format. Always preferable to use the
Washington, DC 20521 format as noted on the left

Important note: **Mexican posts** use regular U.S. mail addresses for both official correspondence and personal mail because they are faster than sending via pouch. Newly assigned officers to these posts should consult with management section to determine the most expeditious address to write their letters of introduction to the principal officer.

The only time the 20521 pouch zip code should be used is for official correspondence or packages sent within the State Department's system (without a stamp). Mail sent from outside the State Department to a pouch address must go through irradiation, which causes lengthy delays.

If you use a personal return address, postage is necessary for interdepartmental correspondence, and it must be sent through the U.S. Postal Service (causing the extensive delays mentioned above).
If speed of delivery is important, and the post has an APO or FPO address, sending the letter to that address through the U.S. Postal Service would be the fastest option.

To confirm 9-digit zip codes and/or APO/FPO addresses, refer to State Department intranet site or see list posted in Overseas Briefing Center.

Please go to <http://go.usa.gov/3vE4F> for a template, created by a fellow Foreign Service officer or create your own using the guidelines that follow:



United States Department of State

Washington, DC 20520

4 lines, single spaced

Date (always month, date, year)

2-4 lines, depending on the length of the letter

The official State Department font for letters to principal officers is **Times New Roman 14 point.**

The Honorable Someone B. Smith
XXXX [city name] Place
Washington, DC 20521-XXXX

2 lines, single spaced

Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:

2 lines, single spaced

[Type your first paragraph here. This paragraph should introduce yourself. Be sure to express your pleasure in the assignment. A good rule of thumb is to include at least three sentences in each paragraph. Be sure to hit spacebar twice after each period.]

Min. 1 inch margin

2 lines, single spaced

[Type your second paragraph here. This paragraph should relate some relevant details about your background and experiences. If you are bringing family to post, perhaps mention them and anything the principal official might find interesting or useful to the mission.]

2 lines, single spaced

[Type your third paragraph here. Be sure to let the principal official know when you plan to arrive to post. Express something of your intention to serve. Close with a pleasantry.]

2 lines, single spaced

Sincerely,

4-6 lines, depending on the length of the letter

Jane E. Doe

COMMUNICATING WITH POST OF ASSIGNMENT			
Position	Form	Timing	GOAL
Ambassador (COM)	Official letter	Notify once, 4-6 weeks prior to arrival	Formal introduction
DCM (see supervisor)	E-mail	Same timing as Ambassador unless DCM is your supervisor	Courtesy contact: attach copy of COM letter
Supervisor (DCM if boss)	E-mail	Early/frequent	Information exchange: job responsibilities
GSO	E-mail	Early/frequent	Information exchange: Shipping, housing, arrival dates & arrangements
CLO	E-mail	Early/frequent	Information exchange: post life and needs
Predecessor	E-mail	Early/frequent	Information exchange: job related
Administrative / Management Officer	E-mail	Early/once	Courtesy contact to notify of communication with others (cc. on e-mails going to GSO) If small post without GSO, Mgt would receive all the contacts.

See 5 FAH-1 H-420 PREPARING LETTERS for more information:

<http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/05fah01/05fah010420.html#H421>

SEND FORMAL, OFFICIAL EMAILS TO:

Deputy Chief of Mission

This should be similar to the letter to the ambassador but sent via e-mail, perhaps including a copy of the letter sent to the ambassador as a courtesy.

Supervisor

In addition to the courtesy letter to the principal officer, you should write to your supervisor as soon as possible after you receive your Assignment Notification (TMONE). Your supervisor is the best person to answer questions relating to your job responsibilities, including information regarding titles for calling cards. Your e-mail to him/her will be a combination courtesy and inquiry communiqué.

Format for Initial Email to Supervisor:

Dear Mr. Brown:

I have recently been assigned to ____ as a ____, and I look forward to this assignment and to becoming a member of the official (Embassy) (Consulate) staff.

I look forward to working with you and the rest of the ____ section. I would appreciate any suggestions you might have on people I should see as I prepare for my assignment.

Sincerely yours, (typed full name)

In a later message to your supervisor, be sure to include your arrival details.

Management Officer/GSO

The management officer at the mission can answer your questions about issues such as living conditions, cars, appliances, consumables, schools, pets, medical services, employment opportunities for dependents, or community services. He/She must also know your travel plans. Be sure to include all details of your itinerary: stopovers en route, name of carrier and flight number, arrival date and time of arrival if driving to post and the like. Also include information on the number of persons accompanying you, their names and the ages of the children, and pets that are accompanying you or arriving later.

SEND INFORMAL, UNOFFICIAL EMAILS TO:

Community Liaison Office Coordinator (CLO)

One of your best sources of information on life at post may be the community liaison office coordinator (CLO). Many overseas posts have a CLO, who sends newcomers information to help them prepare for their move. E-mails to the CLO can be of a more personal nature. You or your spouse may write this message as soon as you have received your assignment. For the name of the CLO at your post, call the CLO Support Officer in the Family Liaison Office at (202) 647-1076 or the employee can check the FLO SharePoint (Intranet) website at:

<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/CommunityLiaisonOffice/Pages/CommunityLiaisonOverseas.aspx>

Predecessor

Another source of information is your predecessor. You may wish to write one of your first e-mails to him/her.