

Trends in Business Communications

A recent research study involving some ten thousand business letters from 42 states reveals some interesting trends that have taken place (in business letter writing) during the past 15 or 20 years.

1. Letter Styles and Format. Approximately 92 percent of all business letters today are written in the modified block and modified block with indented paragraph styles, with the latter slightly leading in popularity. The full block is slowly gaining in usage but slower than textbooks would lead one to believe. The indented style letter has all but disappeared, and the simplified style has not been accepted appreciably.

2. Punctuation. Mixed punctuation is used in about 93 percent of all letters, Open ranks second with about 4 percent, and closed brings in the rear with about 2 percent. Open seems to be gaining slowly, but it is clearly evident that businessmen are slow to accept change.

3. Salutations and Complimentary Closings. There is an unmistakable trend in both of these categories toward more friendly or less formal styles. Whereas Dear Sir and Yours truly were popular 25 years ago, they are used now only in formal writing. The most popular salutation today is Dear Mr. _____. For complimentary closings Yours very truly or Very truly yours leads the list, but is pressed closely by such friendly closings as Cordially yours, Sincerely yours, etc.