

MIDWEST AREA
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
MANUAL

CORRESPONDENCE

Created by
Program Administrative Support Task Group

CORRESPONDENCE

See [ARS Correspondence Manual 261.2M](#).

Foreign Letters

There are numerous countries under U.S. embargo (list updated daily at <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs/>) to which no materials or correspondence may be sent without the permission of the Foreign Asset Control Board, U.S. Dept. of Treasury. The list of countries is updated on a daily basis.



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

FORMAT OF FORMAL LETTER

(Left & right margins 1 inch, top margin 2 inches)

(At least two lines but not more than 6 between letterhead and date)

September 25, 2003 [Spell out the month, type the day and year in numerals]

(At least 3 lines but not more than 8 between date and address)

Dr. A. G. Bell (No longer than 4 inches)
Director of Research
Correspondence Improvement Institute (No longer than 5 lines)
Wabash Falls, Florida 32014-XXXX [Spell out state on letter/abbreviate on env.]
(Double space)

Dear Dr. Bell:
(Double space)

The General Services Administration has recently issued its 1996 edition of the United States Government Correspondence Manual. The new Manual provides that the informal format will be used for most letters. Some letters, like this one, will follow the formal format. The formal letter differs from the informal letter as follows:

- a. The formal letter includes a salutation and complimentary close.
- b. The formal letter is suitable for those situations when the writer knows that the addressee would expect a more personalized letter.

Sincerely,

(Six lines)

ANDREW A. ADDRESSEE (No longer than 2 1/2 inches)
Director

Enclosure: (Enclosure not identified in text)
ARS Correspondence Manual (No longer than 4 inches)

cc:
R. Smith, PD
C. Hanson, GSD

(Bottom margin 1 1/2 inches)

****Note: All mail to Headquarters must go through the Area Office.**



Midwest Area Plant Introduction Research Unit
North Central Regional Plant Introduction Station | Iowa State University | Ames, IA 50011-1170
Voice: 515-294-3255 • Fax: 515-294-4880 • Germplasm Requests Fax: 515-294-1903

An Equal Opportunity Employer



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

(Left & right margins 1 inch, top margin 2 inches)

(To be signed outside originating office)

Dr. A. G. Bell (No longer than 4 inches)
Director of Research
Correspondence Improvement Institute (No longer than 5 lines)
Wabash Falls, Florida 32014-XXXX

(Double space)

Dear Dr. Bell:

(Double space)

Begin the body of the letter two lines below the salutation or subject line, if used, block and flush with the left margin. Begin each main paragraph two lines below the last line of the preceding paragraph and flush with the left margin. double space letters of one paragraph (10 lines or less). Single space the body of letters longer than one paragraph.

When there is a reason to break a paragraph into subparagraphs, they may be lettered and numbered as follows:

- a. Main paragraphs are typed in block style. Subparagraphs are indented four spaces as shown in this example (begin typing on the fifth space). Subparagraphs are typed single spaced with double spaces between them.
 - (1) When a paragraph is subdivided, it must have at least two subdivisions.
 - (a) When paragraphs are subdivided, lettered, and numbered, they fall in the following sequence: a, (1), (a), 1, a, (1), (a).
 - (b) When a paragraph is cited, the reference numbers and letters are written without spaces; for example, "paragraph 3a(2)(c)."
 - (2) A paragraph is begun near the end of the page only if there is space for two or more lines on that page. A paragraph is continued on the following page only if two or more lines can be carried over to that page.
- b. Titles or captions are used in lengthy communications to increase ease of reading and reference.
- c. The arrangement shown here may be varied to meet special requirements such as those for legal documents.

(Bottom margin 1 1/2 inches)



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Dr. A. G. Bell

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Type the second and succeeding pages of a letter on plain bond paper the same quality as the first page. Starting with the second page, type the name of the addressee exactly as it is shown on the first page six lines from the top of the page and flush left with the left margin. Type the page number on the same line flush with the right margin. Continue the text two lines below the name of the addressee. Allow side margins of 1 inch and a bottom margin of 1½ inch.

Sincerely,

(Signature element left blank)

Separate Cover:
ARS Correspondence Manual

(Always identify separate cover items)

cc:
R. Smith, PD
C. Hanson, GSD



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

(Left & right margins 1 inch, top margin 2 inches)

September 25, 2003

(Triple space)

SUBJECT: Format of Informal Letter (No longer than 5 inches)

TO: Arthur A. Addressee, Director (No longer than 5 inches)
General Services Division

FROM: William A. Writer, Deputy Administrator (No longer than 5 inches)

This memo shows the format for preparing informal letters throughout the Agricultural Research Service. This format will expedite the preparation of correspondence and save effort, time, and materials.

The following features of this format should please the typist:

a. Its functional design features the use of the "SUBJECT:," "TO:," and "FROM:" lines and the absence of a salutation and complimentary close.

b. Most elements are blocked along the left margin. This block style minimizes the use of the space bar and tab or functions keys.

Enclosure:

ARS Correspondence Manual (Only describe enclosure if not identified in text)

cc:

C. Hanson, GSD, w/encl.

(Bottom margin 1 ½ inches)



Midwest Area | Plant Introduction Research Unit
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Voice: 515-294-3255 • Fax: 515-294-4880 • Germplasm Requests Fax: 515-294-1903

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Steven R. Shafer (Left & right margins 1 inch, top margin 1 inches)
(Double space)

2

Continued on the following page only if two or more lines can be carried over to that page.

- b. Titles or captions are used in lengthy communications to increase ease of reading and reference.
- c. The arrangement shown here may be varied to meet special requirements such as those for legal documents.

Type the second and succeeding pages of a memo on plain bond paper the same quality as the first page. Starting with the second page, type the name of the addressee exactly as it is shown on the first page six lines from the top of the page and flush with the left margin. Type the page number on the same line flush with the right margin. Continue the text two lines below the name of the addressee. Allow side margins of 1 inch and bottom margin of at least 1½ inch.

(Double space)

Separate Cover:

(Always identify separate cover items.)

ARS Correspondence Manual--10 copies

(Double space)

cc:

R. Smith, PD

C. Hanson, GSD

(Bottom margin 1 ½ inches)

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Service
Plant Introduction Station
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Dr. A. G. Bell
Director of Research
Correspondence Improvement Institute
Wabash Falls, FL 32014-XXXX

This page shows the correct way to address an envelope.

Letters of Recommendation/Support

Official title and stationery may be used to respond to a request from an individual who seeks an employment recommendation or character reference if

- the individual being recommended is seeking Federal employment, OR
- the USDA employee has dealt with the individual being recommended in the course of Federal employment,

AND

- the USDA employee has personal knowledge of the ability or character of the individual making the request.

Official Title and Stationery May Be Used:

- to write a letter recommending an individual seeking to work for USDA or another Government agency;
- to write a letter recommending USDA colleagues who are U.S. citizens;
- to write a letter recommending USDA colleagues who are not U.S. citizens only if the USDA employee represents his or her own views , i.e., personal opinion of the value and credentials of a foreign scientist.

Official Title and Stationery May Not Be Used:

- to write a letter recommending a personal friend;
- to write a letter recommending a relative;
- to write a letter recommending a person who is applying to a potential non-Federal employer if the supervisor determines that responding to such a request is not part of the USDA employee's official duties;
- to write a letter recommending a grant applicant in support of a grant application to the USDA or another Federal agency;

NOTE: Such a letter may violate the anti-representation statutes. USDA employees may write representing their own opinions regarding an applicant if they are personally familiar with the applicant. USDA employees must write on personal stationery and send the letter directly to the applicant (not to the proposed funding source). USDA employees may not urge any actions (e.g., funding) nor make any statements regarding the proposed application (e.g., encourage support). Writing even this type of personal letter may not be appropriate for extramural staff.

Employees may provide a factual letter that simply verifies that a contract between, or project involving, the grant-requesting organization and the agency has been completed and that the Organization accomplished its required actions under the terms of the contract or project in a successful manner. However, in order to avoid accusations of favoritism, agencies choosing to issue these types of letters must be prepared to issue such letters in response to every request.

- to write a letter recommending a colleague who is not seeking Federal employment or with whom with USDA employee has not dealt with in the course of Federal employment;

EXAMPLE. Prior to coming to USDA, an employee taught at a university. A former student has just graduated and is seeking a job with the university. The former student asks for a letter of recommendation from the USDA

employee. The USDA employee may NOT write such a letter on official stationery with official title. The former student is not seeking Federal employment nor has the USDA employee dealt with the former student in the course of Federal employment.

What if during the time the employee is at USDA, the student worked with the employee to edit a manuscript? In this case, assuming the employee worked on the manuscript as part of official duties, the employee may write a letter recommending the student and may use official stationery and the USDA employee's official title because the USDA employee has dealt with the student during the course of Federal employment.

EXAMPLE. A Center Director is asked to write a letter recommending a colleague for a fellowship. The Director can do so and use official stationery and official title only if the Director dealt with the colleague in the course of Federal employment and the fellowship is from a private (non-Federal) source.

- to write a letter recommending a contractor, vendor, or supplier of goods or services;

NOTE: This raises issues of endorsement and preferential treatment by the USDA. Such letters are used by these entities to advertise and promote their products and services and to obtain future business. USDA employees may write about a contractor's progress/performance in the course of an official evaluation of the contract, but may not recommend that others use the vendor's services or good.

EXAMPLE. A contracting officer attends a course on procurement integrity. USDA contracted for the course with Management Concepts, Inc. The contracting officer really enjoyed the course. The contracting officer may write a letter recommending the course on personal stationery and sign her name "Mary Smith". She may only refer to her USDA position as one of several biographical details in the body of her personal letter and make it clear that she is writing in her personal capacity. For example, she may say "As a government contracting officer, I found the course very accurate and presented in a useable manner." This gives Mary Smith the credibility to make the recommendation without endorsing the course officially.

- to write a letter recommending an individual for academic tenure when "personal knowledge" of the individual is limited to the USDA employee's handling of that individual's grant.

Tenure Recommendations: Given that the granting of tenure falls within the internal business of the University and given the importance which tenure status has upon the financial interests of the candidate and the University, Agency managers should presume that the University, in asking the employee to participate in its tenure deliberations, seeks the employee's involvement in his or her official capacity and the Agency manager must then ensure that any such involvement be limited in a manner that best protects the interests of the Federal Government. An employee may not participate in internal University deliberations or decisions concerning tenure, including serving as a member of a tenure committee.

When authorized in advance by the Agency, an employee may provide the University with an appropriate statement concerning that employee's evaluation of the professional qualifications of a University tenure candidate. Factors to consider in determining whether an evaluation is appropriate may include the following:

- ✓ The University sends a request to the Agency for the employee's statement;
 - ✓ The employee's statement expresses a factual evaluation of the candidate's credentials based on official collaborations;
 - ✓ The evaluation would be based upon observations that the Agency employee made during his or her official duties as a Federal employee; and
 - ✓ **The statement avoids language making a tenure recommendation.**
-

USDA employees may not write letters of reference/recommendation to (or for submission to) another federal agency in support of a Visa or Green Card application.

Letters of reference/recommendation may not be written by USDA employees to or for submission to another federal agency in support of Visa or Green Card applications, but may be written on USDA letterhead for any individual who applies for federal employment.

Specific Examples

- 1. Letters in support of visa, extension, or green card:** You are requested (by an individual, by his/her attorney, or by an institution) to write a letter that you or the requestor will send to the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS-USCIS), or other federal agency supporting a petition for a visa, extension, or green card.

Not allowed: You cannot send a letter of recommendation or support on behalf of another individual to or for submission to any government agency, whether on USDA letterhead, or on plain stationery.

Why: A criminal statute, 18 USC § 205, prohibits a federal employee from making representations on behalf of another before or to a federal entity (except in relation to federal employment).

- 2. Official request for waiver, green card or other immigration information:** The DHS-USCIS or Department of State (DOS) contacts you to obtain information about the qualities and qualifications of a current or former postdoctoral employee in your USDA location.

Allowed: You may write such a letter on USDA letterhead in response to such a written request from another government agency. Your response should be reviewed through the appropriate supervisory chain.

Why: The request is made officially from one government agency to another, and would be transmitted by as an official USDA communication. The statute does not prohibit official, agency cooperation and communication.

For additional information, contact the REE Ethics Office at:
ReeEthics@ars.usda.gov.

January 2007

Congressional Contact Information

It is important to give headquarters notification - **before the fact, not after** - when congressional contact is scheduled to occur.

Congressional contact includes phone calls, briefings, etc., as well as visits to the ARS facility by Senators, Representatives, and/or their staff. Notification should be the A-213 congressional contact form but an email or a phone call to Sharon Drumm (202-720-3173) will work in a pinch.

The easiest and quickest way to send A-213 forms is to go to:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/newla/congressconv.html>

This website enables you to complete the form electronically and submit it to the correct recipients. Ensure the appropriate Area Director is included on the recipient list.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

Agricultural Counselors or Attaches, Foreign Governments, Intergovernmental International Organizations (e.g., IAEA, FAO, UN, CSIRO, BARD)

Notes: Do not date. Do not mark letter or envelope "air mail"
 Check FAS Overseas Directory--Do not use proper names or street addresses because incumbents change frequently. Salutation: Dear Sir:

TYPE OF PAPER	PREPARE FOR	ENVELOPE	ADDRESS
1 original letterhead (signed) Undated	Addressee w/encls. if any	Unfranked w/return address	Addressee (If letter is for an attaché or counselor, see Overseas FAS Directory for address)
1 copy letterhead (signed)*	Courtesy copy for attaché/w encls. if any	None	
1 copy letterhead	American Embassy w/copy of incoming (show cc on this copy as cc: American Embassy)*	None	
SHOW ALL CCs + LEGEND ON COPIES FROM HERE DOWN (see example below)			
1 copy	FAS	None	
1 copy	Center Director/Lab Director/ Research Leader Location Coord. w/copy of incoming (whichever is applicable to your location)	Unfranked	CDS/LDs/ RLs/LCs Address
1 yellow copy Type in upper right-hand corner: "Return to (your location address) when letter issues."	Official file Attach <u>original</u> incoming letter	1 Franked letter-size envelope	Your location address. (This yellow copy will be returned to you with a date and initials from FAS)

<u>Send all of the above in 1 large franked envelope to:</u> Mary M. Haley ARS Correspondence Management Unit Room 315-A Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-0300	<u>Example for ccs & legend:</u> cc: Agricultural counselor FAS CD/LD/RL/LC (whichever is applicable) USDA:ARS:MWA:Writer initials:typist initials:date Phone number of writer
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* For Taiwan letters, cc: AIT Taipei; Singapore letters, cc: Agricultural Trade Officer.

NOTE: Attach original incoming correspondence to yellow file copy. Attach copies of incoming correspondence to all ccs except original outgoing letter.

Forms of address

The following list shows the address element, salutation, and complimentary close, when used, for certain addresses.

Addressee	Address on Letter (Note: use DC (no periods) on the Envelope)	Salutation and Complimentary Close
<u>THE WHITE HOUSE</u> The President	The President The White House Washington, D.C. 20500	Dear Mr., Madam President: Respectfully, or The President Respectfully submitted,
Spouse of the President	Mrs. (full name) The White House Washington, D.C. 20500	Dear Mrs., Mr. (surname) ¹ Sincerely,
Assistant to the President	The Honorable (full name) Assistant to the President	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.
Former President ²	Formal: The Vice President United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 Informal: The Honorable (full name) The Vice President of the United States Washington, D.C. 20501	Dear Mr., Madam Vice President: Sincerely, Dear Mr., Madam Vice President: Sincerely,
Former Vice President	The Honorable (full name) (no title) (local address) (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Director, Office of Management and Budget	The Honorable (full name) Director, Office of Management and Budget Washington, D.C. 20503	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname):
<u>THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY</u> The Chief Justice	The Chief Justice The Supreme Court Washington, D.C. 20543	Dear Chief Justice: Sincerely,
Associate Justice	Justice (surname) The Supreme Court Washington, D.C. 20543	Dear Justice (surname): Sincerely,

The Clerk of the Supreme Court	The Clerk of the Supreme Court The Supreme Court Washington, D.C. 20543	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname) Sincerely,
<u>THE CONGRESS</u> President of the Senate	The Honorable (full name) President of the Senate Washington, D.C. 20510	Dear Mr., Madam president: Sincerely,
Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable (full name) Speaker of the House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515	Dear Mr., Madam Speaker: Sincerely,
United States Senator	The Honorable (full name) United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 or The Honorable (full name) United States Senator (Congressional District Office address) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Senator (surname): Sincerely,
United States Representative	The Honorable (full name) House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515 or The Honorable (full name) Member, United States House of Representatives (local address) (ZIP Code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): or Dear Congressman, Congresswoman (surname): Sincerely,
Committee Chairman Chairwoman Chair	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Committee on (name) United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 or The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Committee on (name) House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman: ³ Madam Chairwoman: Chair: Sincerely,
Subcommittee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Committee on (name) (name of parent Committee) United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 or The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Subcommittee on (name) (name of parent Committee) House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515	Dear Mr., Madam Chairman: Sincerely,
Joint Committee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Joint Committee on (name) Congress of the United States Washington, D.C. (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Madam Chairman: Sincerely,

Senator-elect Representative-elect	The Honorable (full name) United States Senator-elect or Representative-elect (address, if given) or Care of the United States Senate or House of Representatives	Dear Senator-elect (surname) Sincerely, Dear Congressman-elect: Sincerely,
Office of a Deceased Senator or Representative	Office of the late Senator ⁴ (full name) United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510 or Office of the Late Representative (full name) House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20510	Sir: or Madam: Sincerely,
Secretary of the United States Senate	The Honorable (full name) Secretary of the Senate United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510	Dear M., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Delegate	The Honorable (full name) Delegate from (name) United States House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515	Dear Mr. Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
<u>LEGISLATIVE AGENCIES</u> Comptroller General	The Honorable (full name) Comptroller General of the United States Washington, D.C. 20515	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Librarian of Congress	The Honorable (full name) Librarian of Congress Library of Congress Washington, D.C. 20540	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Public Printer	The Honorable (full name) Public Printer U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, D.C. 20401	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
<u>EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS</u> Cabinet Members	The Honorable (full name) Deputy Secretary of (name of Department) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code) or The Honorable (full name) Assistant Secretary of (name of Department) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code) or The Honorable (full name) Under Secretary of (name of Department) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Postmaster General	The Honorable (full name) Postmaster General Washington, D.C. 20260	Dear Mr., Madam Postmaster General:

<u>AMERICAN MISSIONS</u> American Ambassador	The Honorable (full name) American Ambassador (City) (Country)	Sir: Madam: (formal) Dear Mr., Madam Ambassador: (informal) Very truly yours, (formal) Sincerely, (informal)
Personal (Special) Representative of the President	The Honorable (full name) Personal Representative of the President of the United States of America to (Country) (City) (State/Country)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
American Consul General or American Consul	Mr. (full name) American Consul General (or American Consul) (City) (Country)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
<u>FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS</u> Foreign Ambassador in the United States	His (Her) Excellency (full name) Ambassador of (Country) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code)	Excellency:(formal) Dear Mr., Madam Ambassador: (informal) Very truly yours, (formal) Sincerely, (informal)
Foreign Minister in the United States (head of a Legation)	The Honorable (full name) Minister of (Country) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Madam Minister: Sincerely,
Foreign Minister Counselor in the United States	The Honorable (full name) Minister Counselor Embassy of (Country) Washington, D.C. (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Madam Minister: Sincerely,
<u>INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS</u> United States Representative to the United Nations or Organization of American States	The Honorable (full name) United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organi- zation of American States) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Sir: or Madam: (formal) Dear Mr., Madam Ambassador: (informal) Very truly yours, (formal) Sincerely, (informal)
<u>STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS</u> Governor of State	The Honorable (full name) Governor of (State) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Governor (surname): Sincerely,
Lieutenant Governor	The Honorable (full name) Lieutenant Governor of (State) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
State Senator	The Honorable (full name) (State) Senate (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
State Representative Assemblyman Delegate	The Honorable (full name) (State) House of Representatives (or Assembly or house of Delegates) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. (surname): Sincerely,
Mayor	The Honorable (full name) Mayor of (City) (City) (State) (ZIP code)	Dear Mayor (surname): Sincerely,

¹i.e., last name.

²Use the Honorable unless the former President is entitled to another distinctive title (for example, military) and prefers to be addressed by it. For example, General (full name); Dear General (surname).

³Dear Mr. Chairman is most commonly used; however, Madam Chairwoman and Chair are options.

⁴If the name of the late Senator's secretary or administrative assistant is known, the letter may be addressed to that person by name.