

# *Washington State Correspondence Guidelines*



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## Introduction

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Citizens have a right to expect clear, concise, easily understood communication from state government. The Washington State Correspondence Guidelines will assist you in preparing general correspondence.

We encourage the use of *The Gregg Reference Manual* to answer questions on style, grammar, usage, and formatting. Throughout these guidelines, you will find cites to *The Gregg Reference Manual, Tenth Edition*.

These guidelines are available online at

[http://www.executiveassistantsgroup.com/EAG\\_Correspondence\\_Guidelines\\_August\\_2009.pdf](http://www.executiveassistantsgroup.com/EAG_Correspondence_Guidelines_August_2009.pdf).

For Governor's correspondence, please refer to the Governor's Executive Correspondence Guidelines which is available online at:

[http://www.executiveassistantsgroup.com/index\\_files/Governors\\_Guidelines\\_1-06.pdf](http://www.executiveassistantsgroup.com/index_files/Governors_Guidelines_1-06.pdf).



*Correspondence Guidelines Committee  
Washington State Executive Assistants Group*



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## Correspondence Preferences

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- State the purpose of the letter in the first paragraph.
- Courtesy copy notations contain two lowercase c's followed by a colon, tab, name, title, and agency (title isn't always necessary, but the rest are), as follows:
  - cc:    John Smith, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor**
- Ranking order of cc's:
  - U.S. Senators & Representatives
  - Governors
  - State Senators
  - State Representatives
  - Other elected officials
  - Agency directors (secretaries or commissioners)
  - Private citizens
  - Governor's Staff
- In an address, always use two spaces between the state and the zip code:
  - Olympia, Washington 98504**
  - Olympia, WA 98504**
- Use the active voice. Avoid the passive voice.
  - Active:     I believe...**
  - Passive:    It is believed...**
- All Washington State government correspondence should be on state agency letterhead. For sustainability, you may print on both sides of the page. Government letterhead should never be used for personal correspondence.

## Format For Agency Letterhead

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Depending on the degree of formality, letters and memoranda may be used interchangeably within Washington State government agencies. Use only the letter format when corresponding with:

- Local Governments
- Private Industry
- State agencies outside Washington
- The Public



### AGENCY LETTERHEAD

*Date is 2.25 inches from the top of the page*

August 17, 2005 ▼ *4 Returns*

Mr. John Doe  
123 Main Street

Olympia, WA 98504 (*Zip code is two spaces after the state*): ▼ *2 Returns*

Re: Forms Enclosed: ▼ *2 Returns*

Dear Mr. Doe: ▼ *2 Returns*

I received your letter dated August 15, 2005. Enclosed are the forms you requested.  
▼ *2 Returns*

If you have any questions about the forms, please contact me. ▼ *2 Returns*

Sincerely, ▼ *4 Returns*

Jane Smith  
Administrative Assistant ▼ *2 Returns*

Enclosures (2) ▼ *2 Returns*

cc: Jane Doe, President, Doe Enterprises

(In *Gregg*, the *re:* line is below the salutation. We show it above the salutation, which is the common practice.)

- Full-block style (See *Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1302(3)*)
- One inch margins left and right
- Right margin not justified
- Single Space
- 12 pt font

- Enclosure is used for letters
- Attachment is used for memos

## Continuation Pages

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*Header should start about 1 inch from the top*

Use plain paper (not letterhead)  
for continuation pages

The Honorable John Doe

August 29, 2000 *Make sure date is before the page number*

Page 2 *Page number should be in numeric format*

### *3 Returns between continuation header and text ▼*

(In *Gregg*, the positions of the date and page number are reversed. We are following the example shown in the Governor's Executive Correspondence Guidelines, which is the common practice.)

# Format For Agency Memoranda

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Depending on the degree of formality, letters and memoranda may be used interchangeably within Washington State government agencies. Memoranda should not be sent outside Washington State government agencies.



## AGENCY LETTERHEAD

*Date is 2.25 inches from the top of the page*

August 17, 2005 ▼ *4 Returns*

- One inch margins left and right
- Right margin not justified
- Single Space
- 12 pt font

TO: John Smith

FROM: Jane Doe

SUBJECT: New Safety Policy ▼ *3 Returns*

If the memo is addressed to many people, use a Distribution List (See *Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1374(j)*)

Thank you for your comments during today's Safety Committee Meeting. Attached is a revised Safety Policy for your review. ▼ *2 Returns*

Attachment (1) ▼ *2 Returns*

cc: Jim Doe, Human Resources Manager

- Enclosure is used for letters
- Attachment is used for memos

## Envelope/Label Formats

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Use upper case and no punctuation on envelopes and labels. Consolidated Mail Services provides these guidelines:

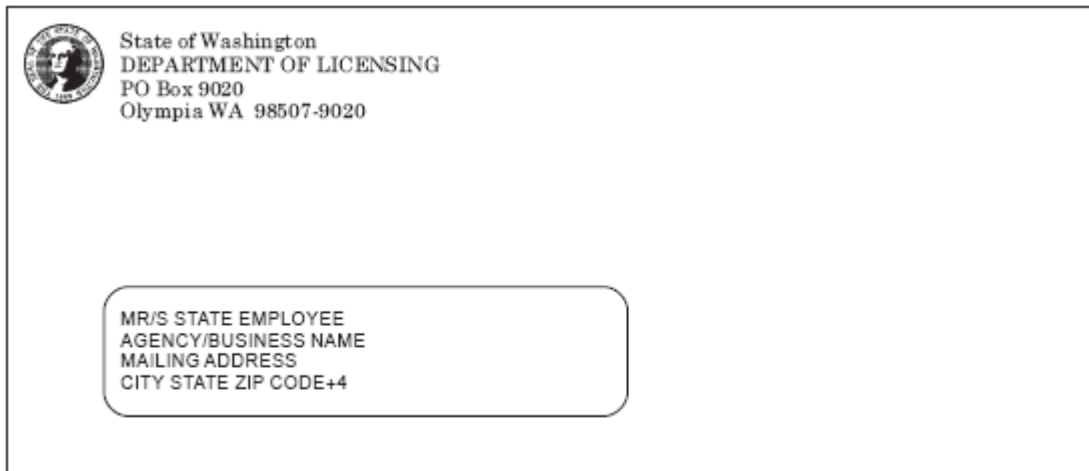
The individual's name: MR JOHN SMITH  
The division or work unit: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
The department: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
The PO Box number: PO BOX 42565  
The city, state, and ZIP+4: OLYMPIA WA 98504-2565

OR


The individual's name: MR JOHN SMITH  
The division or work unit: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
The department: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
The street address: 123 ANY STREET  
The PO Box number: PO BOX 42565  
The city, state, and ZIP+4: OLYMPIA WA 98504-2565

### Window Envelopes

Leave a clear space of at least 1/8 inch between the address and all edges of the window of an envelope.



## Campus Mail

FORM S.F. 7 (10/95)			STATE OF WASHINGTON <b>INTER-OFFICE MAIL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify individual <u>or</u> organization.</li> <li>• Include mail stop number.</li> <li>• Building name not required.</li> <li>• Cross off previous entries.</li> <li>• Please do not skip spaces.</li> </ul>
<del>Jane Doe</del>		MAIL STOP 40004		
John Smith		42422		

## Foreign Mail

Include the name of the country on all mail sent outside the United States. Separate it from other mail because it will require additional postage. Mark the pink slip as "International" and address the envelope using either of the following formats:

Foreign Country

MR/S CUSTOMER  
 123 JONES STREET  
 BOTUCATU SAO PAULO  
 BRAZIL

Canada

MR/S CUSTOMER  
 123 JONES STREET  
 VICTORIA Z4C 286  
 CANADA

## Address/Salutation Formats

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For specific addresses, check the listing for the individual you are writing to. References for addresses are listed below.

### City

The Honorable John Doe  
Mayor of Olympia

Dear Mayor Doe:

The Honorable Mary Doe  
Olympia City Council

Dear Councilman/woman Doe:

Chief John S. Doe  
Olympia Police Department

Dear Chief Doe:

### County

The Honorable John Doe  
Thurston County Commissioner

Dear Commissioner Doe:

The Honorable John Doe  
King County Executive

Dear Executive Doe:

Sheriff Jane Smith  
Thurston County Sheriff's Office

Dear Sheriff Smith:

### Elected Officials

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire  
Governor of Washington  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

The Honorable Sam Reed  
Washington State Secretary of State  
P.O. BOX 40220  
Olympia, WA 98504-0220

Dear Secretary Reed:

## State

The Honorable Jane Smith  
Washington House of Representatives

**Dear Representative Smith:**

The Honorable John Doe  
Washington State Senate

**Dear Senator Doe:**

*For address information, see the legislature home page:*  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature>

## Federal

The Honorable John Doe  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Dear President Doe:**

The Honorable Jane Doe  
Vice President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Dear Vice President Doe:**

The Honorable Jane Smith  
United States Senate

**Dear Senator Smith:**

*For address information, see the Senate home page:* <http://www.senate.gov/>

The Honorable John Doe  
U. S. House of Representatives

**Dear Congressman/woman Doe:**

*For address information, see the House home page:* <http://www.house.gov/>

## Tribal

The Honorable John Doe  
Quinault Nation

**Dear Chairman/woman Doe:**

## Word Usage

See *Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1101* for more examples.

Word Usage	Examples
<b>Agencywide</b> is one word, not hyphenated.	
<b>A lot</b> (NOT: alot) Many or much.	Thanks <b>a lot</b> for your help.
<b>Affect</b> <i>vt.</i> To influence.	The storm may <b>affect</b> our schedule.
<b>Allot</b> <i>vt.</i> To assign a portion for a particular purpose.	You will have to <b>allot</b> a portion of the budget to cover unforeseen expenses.
<b>a.m./p.m.</b> Always lowercase with periods.	
<b>Assure</b> <i>vt.</i> To inform confidently; to cause to feel sure.  <i>Assure, ensure, and insure</i> all mean "to make certain." Only <b>assure</b> is used to refer to a person in the sense of "set the mind at rest."	I want to <b>assure</b> you that nothing will go wrong.
<b>Effect</b> <i>n.</i> Result; <i>vt.</i> To bring about.	It will be months before we can assess the full <b>effect</b> [result] of the new law.  It is essential that we <b>effect</b> [bring about] an immediate improvement in sales.
<b>Ensure</b> <i>vt.</i> To make certain.	I want to <b>ensure</b> that nothing can go wrong tomorrow.
<b>Insure</b> <i>vt.</i> To cover with insurance; to make certain or secure.	I want to <b>insure</b> this necklace for \$5,000.
<b>In regards to.</b> Substitute <i>in regard to, with regard to, regarding, or as regards</i>	I am writing <b>in regard to</b> your letter of May 1.
<b>Its-it's.</b> <i>Its</i> is a possessive pronoun. <i>It's</i> stands for "it is" or "it has."	The company must protect <b>its</b> assets.  <b>It's</b> time to go to the meeting.
<b>Per-a.</b> <i>Per</i> is often used to mean "by the," as in <i>28 miles per gallon</i> . Whenever possible, substitute <i>a</i> or <i>an</i> ; for example, <i>\$8 an hour</i> .	
<b>Percent</b> is always spelled out as one word.	
<b>Statewide</b> is one word, not hyphenated.	
<b>Which-that.</b> <i>Which</i> and <i>that</i> are used when referring to places, objects, and animals. <i>Which</i> is always used to introduce nonessential clauses, and <i>that</i> is ordinarily used to introduce essential clauses.	See <i>Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1062</i>

Word Usage	Examples
<b>Who-that.</b> <i>Who</i> and <i>that</i> are used when referring to persons.	See <i>Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1062</i>
<b>Who's-whose.</b> <i>Who's</i> stands for "who is" or "who has." <i>Whose</i> is the possessive form of who.	<i>Who's</i> going to the meeting? <i>Whose</i> notes are these?

## Capitalization

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- **biennium:** capitalized only when referring to a specific biennium.  
**2001-03 Biennium**  
**The funds appropriated for this biennium**
- **committee, commission, board, department, director:** capitalized only when referring to a specific body already mentioned by its full name.
- **federal:** capitalized only when it is part of the official name of a federal agency.  
**the Federal Reserve Board**  
**subject to federal, state, and local laws**
- **Governor:** always capitalized.
- **Governor's Mansion:** always capitalized.
- **Legislature, Congress, Senate, House, House of Representatives:** always capitalized.
- **legislative, legislator, legislation:** not capitalized.
- **senator, representative:** not capitalized when used without a legislator's name.
- **state:** capitalize only when it follows the name of a state.  
**Washington State**  
**the state of Washington**

## Acronyms

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Be conservative in the use of acronyms.

Use the full name of a program, plan, or agency if it appears only once in the text. Place the acronym in parentheses after the name when this abbreviation will appear two or more times in the text. Try to use an appropriate designation such as *the plan*, *the agency*, or *the program* to limit the use of acronyms.

## Citations

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Follow the guidelines set by the *Revised Code of Washington, Washington Administrative Code*, and the *Office of Reporter of Decisions*, which prepares the decisions and opinions of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals for publication.

### RCW Sections

RCW 1.08.010  
RCW 1.08.010(3) -- not "subsection (3) of RCW 1.08.010"  
RCW 1.08.010(3)(a)(ii)  
RCW 1.08.010(3) and (5)  
RCW 1.08.010 and 1.08.015  
RCW 1.08.010, 1.08.016, and 1.08.037  
RCW 1.08.010 through 1.08.140 for an inclusive string

### RCW Chapters

chapter 34.05 RCW  
chapter 24.03 or 24.06 RCW  
chapter 24.03 and 24.06 RCW  
chapter 24.03, 24.06, and 34.05 RCW

### RCW Titles

Title 43 RCW  
Title 43 and 44 RCW  
Title 34, 43, and 90 RCW

### WAC

WAC 296-34-020  
chapter 296-34 WAC  
Title 296 WAC

### Session Laws

Session Laws	Laws of 2002, ch. 107 § 3
Special Sessions	Laws of 1995, 2d Spec. Sess., ch. 14, § 21
Extraordinary Sessions	Laws of 1963, 1st Ex. Sess., ch. 26





## Americans with Disabilities Act

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Under the ADA and the Governor's Executive Order on Implementing the ADA (EO 93-03), public documents must be made available in alternate format, upon request, to people with disabilities to ensure effective communication.

Types of alternate format include Braille, large print, readers, audio tape, and computer disk.

When producing a brochure or other publication for distribution, include a statement with directions on who to contact, such as the agency's ADA coordinator, to obtain the information in an alternate format.

Other resources include:

Americans with Disabilities website: [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

Washington School for the Blind, Braille Access Center: [www.wssb.org](http://www.wssb.org)