

Survey Guidance: Letters, E-Mail Messages, and Introductions for Mail and Electronic Questionnaires

Note: *This guidance is designed to ensure that GAO policies on evidence and generally accepted government auditing standards are met. The guidance conforms to the generally accepted principles and practices of the appropriate disciplines. Statements that particular actions “should” be taken are practices that are expected to be followed, unless there are good reasons for not doing so. Before deviating from a practice expressed as a “should” statement, staff members must consult with an appropriate staff member in Applied Research and Methods (ARM) or a team specialist and must document the consultation.*

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Introduction

This document provides guidance for writing letters and e-mail messages that precede and accompany mail or electronic questionnaires, including guidance on what should be included and why. It also presents a number of examples of introductory sections of mail, Web-based, and MS Word electronic questionnaires (MS WEQs)—that is, questionnaires developed using MS Word that are generally sent as an e-mail attachment. Although you are not required to follow this guidance; it is considered good practice and should help achieve an adequate response rate.

General Guidance

Be brief: A major goal of this guidance is to minimize the reading that respondents must do before starting to answer the questions in a questionnaire. To that end, we suggest that only essential information be provided, that information be stated concisely, and that repetition of information in various letters and e-mail messages be kept to a minimum. As to repetition, we realize that some information, such as a phrase or sentence about the purpose of the survey or the names of GAO staff to contact with questions - must appear in more than one communication. However, other information - such as what GAO is, how survey respondents were selected, estimates of the time it will take to complete the questionnaire, and who should complete the questionnaire - generally does not need to be repeated.

We suggest that nonessential information should be avoided. For example:

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- Avoid lengthy or detailed descriptions when describing the purpose of the survey. Try to use just one or two sentences.
- Avoid providing the names of congressional committees, subcommittees, or members who requested the study. This information is unnecessary and often confusing; in fact, it may bias answers, affect the types of people who respond, or reduce response rates. In most cases, it is preferable to merely say that the Congress or a congressional committee asked GAO to study the topic.
- Avoid using terms such as “the investigative arm of the Congress” and “an independent audit agency of the Congress” when describing GAO. Use more general terms - such as “an agency of the Congress” or “the evaluation arm of the Congress” - so as not to imply that we are investigating or auditing the respondents or their program.
- Do not include an outline of questionnaire content. If respondents need an outline, they can easily review the questionnaire.

Other points to keep in mind

Consistency of terms: Try to use terms consistently. For example, don’t use “study” in one place and “evaluation” in another. In particular, do not use “survey” and “questionnaire” interchangeably. Use “survey” when referring to the entire process of collecting data. The term should be used primarily in introductory statements, such as “GAO is conducting a survey of program administrators.” Use “questionnaire” when referring to the data collection instrument – the means of collecting the data. For example, avoid saying “Please complete and return this survey by August 1, 2009.” Rather say, “Please complete and return this questionnaire by August 1, 2009.”

Third-party endorsements: A powerful tool to increase response rates for surveys of member organizations is an endorsement statement such as: “The American Association of Airport Executives is notifying its members of the importance of participating in GAO’s survey.” However, such an endorsement can also introduce bias into the survey results, for example, if the organization is advocating a specific agenda related to the survey topic. Therefore, use caution when enlisting endorsements from such organizations.

Confidentiality: If the engagement team, in conjunction with ARM and OGC, determines that a survey requires a pledge of confidentiality, refer to the guidance in the GAO Policy Manual, section 150, “Portfolio and Risk Management, Part B – Access to Information and Limitations of the Use of Data – Wording of Pledges.” If a pledge of confidentiality is offered, it can be included in the survey cover letter or in the activation e-mail message (i.e., the e-mail message that respondents receive when the Web-based survey becomes available for them to complete). If a pledge is offered, it should also be repeated in the introductory paragraphs of the questionnaire. (See Example 5, “Cover Letter for a Mail Survey” (paragraph 2) for an example of a pledge of confidentiality.)

“Return by . . .” guidance: It is not clear whether requesting due dates in a form like “Please complete and return this questionnaire to GAO by August 1, 2009” improves response rates over more ambiguous forms such as “. . . within 1 week of receiving the questionnaire.” Use your own judgment as to which form you use. However, it is strongly suggested that if actual dates are used, they be confined to the survey letters or e-mail messages and not stated on the questionnaire. These dates are always subject to being extended, depending on the flow of returns. Therefore, it is recommended that they not be included in the questionnaire, which is difficult to change once it has been administered.

Signatures: Survey-related letters and e-mail messages, whether printed or electronic, may contain the name and signature of a GAO staff person with authority, such as a managing director, director, or assistant director. For printed correspondence such as notification letters, cover letters, and follow-up letters, a name and a signature should be included. In many cases, the engagement team will have an electronic signature available. If not, contact a Product Assistance Group (PAG) representative to obtain one. For corresponding e-mail messages, a name and a signature are optional. If you wish to include an electronic signature on an e-mail message for a Web-based survey, obtain the electronic signature and ask the QPL contractor to include it in the e-mail message.

Letters and E-Mail Messages

To notify potential respondents that they are to be part of a survey, you should usually send them two communications: (1) a notification letter (for mail surveys) or a notification e-mail message (for Web-based surveys and MS WEQs) explaining the purpose of the survey and that a questionnaire will be following and (2) with the questionnaire, a cover letter or e-mail message explaining the purpose of the survey and the importance of responding. For Web-based surveys, the second e-mail message should also provide instructions about how to access the survey Web site, log in, and complete the Web-based questionnaire. For MS WEQs, this second e-mail message should provide instructions about how to open, save, complete, and return the questionnaire.

After some time following the initial mailing or activation of the Web-based questionnaire, you should send a follow-up letter or e-mail message to nonrespondents. In these communications, you should include a statement pointing out that GAO has not yet received a completed questionnaire. In addition, repeat the survey's purpose and stress the importance of responding. If the questionnaire was mailed, include another copy of it; if e-mailed, attach another copy of the MS WEQ and repeat the instructions about how to access and complete the questionnaire. For Web-based surveys, repeat the instructions about how to access the survey Web site, log in, and complete the Web-based questionnaire.

For letters, as well as envelopes, guidance on address conventions is in the appendix.

Notification Letters and E-Mail Messages

We recommend using notification letters for mail surveys and notification e-mail messages for Web-based and MS WEQs. A notification letter or e-mail message is a brief message that is sent out 2 to 4 business days before the questionnaire is mailed, the Web-based questionnaire is activated, or the e-mail message containing the MS WEQ is sent.

Notification letters and e-mail messages should fulfill these three basic functions:

1. Increase the response rate: Response rates have been shown to increase when potential respondents receive notification of the survey before the questionnaire is sent. This notification provides respondents with background about GAO and briefly describes the survey's purpose.
2. Test addresses to correct errors: For Web-based questionnaires and MS WEQs, notification allows us to test the respondents' e-mail addresses so that we can correct errors (such as returns from incorrect or outdated e-mail addresses) before the questionnaire is sent or activated.
3. Identify inappropriate potential respondents: For Web-based questionnaires and MS WEQs, notification gives inappropriate potential respondents an opportunity to inform GAO that they are inappropriate before the questionnaire is sent or activated.

Note that functions 2 and 3 are most useful for Web-based questionnaires and MS WEQs. For mail questionnaires, it could be a few days between the time the notification letter is mailed and received by the potential respondent. Given this time period, there would probably not be enough time for information to reach GAO so that we could correct the address or identify the appropriate recipient before sending out the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the potential increase in response rate associated with the notification communication outweighs the cost - so we do suggest using them for mail questionnaires as well.

Guidelines

The following guidelines give the basic elements of a (1) well-structured notification letter for a mail survey and (2) an e-mail message for a Web-based or MS WEQ survey. Two examples are provided.

Element	Notification letter	Notification e-mail message
Date	Spells out rather than abbreviates the Month, for example, December 12, 2009	[Same as letter]
Salutation: “Dear (Name):”	Required, based on the name in the mailing address or e-mail addresses ^a	[Optional]
Introductory paragraph	Identifies GAO and its legitimate role in collecting survey data: “The Congress has asked GAO to do this study” ^b	[Same as letter]
Mid-paragraph(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains the survey’s purpose and the importance of responding May include a confidentiality statement or description of how data will be presented in GAO’s report Asks people who receive the notification to contact GAO if they are not the appropriate person to be included in our survey If applicable, may include information about a third-party organization (for example, an association) supporting our survey 	[Same as letter]
Mid-paragraph(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tells when the questionnaire will be mailed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tells when a Web-based survey will be activated or MS WEQ will be sent
GAO contacts	Provides GAO contacts—two names, if possible, with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses—for respondents’ queries	[Same as letter]
Conclusion	Expresses appreciation, for example, “Thank you in advance for your assistance”	[Same as letter]
Signature	A GAO staff person with authority	[Same as letter, but optional]

^aFurther guidance on addresses is in the appendix.

^bMore information is at GAO’s external Web site, at “About GAO,” and in the Preface of the *GAO Policy Manual*.

Example 1: Notification Letter for a Mail Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 14, 2009

Mr. Michael Williams
TAA Program Coordinator
Pennsylvania Department of Labor
555 Capital Ave., Suite 56
Harrisburg, PA 12345

Dear Mr. Williams:

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, an agency of the Congress, has been asked to review a range of issues related to the implementation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Reform Act of 2002. In conducting this review, GAO is surveying officials in all 50 states to gather information on the states' experiences with the TAA program since the act went into effect.

You have been identified as your state's contact for issues related to the TAA Reform Act and should receive our questionnaire in the mail within a few days. Your answers will allow GAO to provide the Congress the information it needs to monitor the TAA program.

If for any reason you are not the appropriate person to receive the questionnaire, please notify one of the following GAO contacts: Walter Smith at 202-512-1234 (SmithW@gao.gov) or Mary Harrison at 202-512-5678 (HarrisonM@gao.gov).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Linda F. Wilson, Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

Example 2: Notification E-Mail Message for a Web-based or MS Word Electronic Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 25, 2009

Dear Mr. Allen: *[Salutation optional]*

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, the evaluation arm of the Congress, has been asked to study the role of community colleges and technical schools as pathways to higher academic learning and employment for youths and adults. In this study, GAO is surveying the directors of institutional research at the nation’s public community colleges and technical schools.

You have been identified as the contact for your school on issues related to this topic. If you are not an appropriate contact, please notify one of the GAO staff members listed in the last paragraph of this e-mail.

[For Web-based surveys] In a few days, we will activate our questionnaire on the Internet and notify you by e-mail that it is available. You will be able to complete the questionnaire from any computer that has access to the Web.

[For electronic MS Word electronic surveys] In a few days, we will send you another e-mail message that will include our questionnaire as a Microsoft Word attachment. You should be able to complete it on your computer and return it to GAO via e-mail.

The presidents of the member institutions of the American Association of Community Colleges and Association for Career and Technical Education have expressed their support for GAO’s study. GAO has notified the president of your institution about the survey in a separate e-mail message.

Your responses will provide critical information that will be shared with the Congress. We will not release individually identifiable data outside of GAO, unless compelled by law or requested by the Congress. While the results of the survey will generally be provided in summary form in our report, individual answers may be discussed, but they will not include any information that could be used to identify individual respondents.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact April Locke at 202-512-4000 (LockeA@gao.gov) or James Miller at 206-287-0001 (MillerJ@gao.gov).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Linda F. Wilson, Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

} *[Electronic signature optional]*

Cover Letters for Mail Surveys

A cover letter provides information that encourages respondents to participate in a survey and in some cases may help an organizational gatekeeper determine who should complete the questionnaire.

Guidelines

Research has shown that following certain guidelines when writing the cover letter will help provide the respondent with a good understanding of what is being asked and why a response is essential. The following guidelines outline the basic elements of a good cover letter, which should be limited to 1 page. Three examples of cover letters for mail surveys are provided.

Element	Guidelines
Date	Spells out rather than abbreviates the month, for example, December 12, 2009
Address and salutation	Mailing address ^a “Dear (Name):” Based on the name in the address
Introductory paragraph	Identifies GAO and its legitimate role in collecting survey data, for example, “The Congress asked GAO to do this study” ^b
Mid-paragraph(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States the survey’s purpose and the importance of responding • Describes any potential benefit to respondents • May include a confidentiality statement or a description of how data will be presented in GAO’s report • Identifies who should respond and how to complete the questionnaire • Gives the time it will take to complete the questionnaire (assuming that we can provide an estimate that is sufficiently accurate to not weaken credibility with respondents) • Provides information on when we would like the questionnaire returned - either by a specific date or within a time frame (for example, within 1 week of receiving the questionnaire)
GAO contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides GAO contacts for respondents’ questions: two names, if possible, with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses
Conclusion	Expresses appreciation, for example, “Thank you in advance for your assistance”
Signature	A GAO staff person with authority

^aFurther guidance on addresses is in the appendix.

^bMore information is at GAO’s external Web site, at “About GAO,” and in the Preface of the *GAO Policy Manual*.

Example 3: Cover Letter for a Mail Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Mr. Leonard Landowner
Real Estate Regulator
Real Estate Regulatory Agency
444 G St. NW
Youngstown, OH 44451

Dear Mr. Landowner:

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, responsible for reporting to the Congress on federal programs, is studying the states' regulation of real estate appraisers. In conducting this study, GAO is asking agency officials who regulate real estate appraisers—in each state, territory, and the District of Columbia—to complete the enclosed questionnaire.

Your response will inform the Congress about state regulatory practices for real estate appraisers and the relationship between the state regulatory agencies and regulatory bodies. So that the information can be as complete as possible, your response is essential.

Please return your completed questionnaire, in the enclosed postage-paid envelope, by January 30, 2009. If you have any questions or comments about this questionnaire, please contact Dennis Norton at 202-512-0001 (NortonD@gao.gov) or Allen G. Martin at 415-904-0002 (MartinA@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance with this study.

Sincerely yours,

David F. Smith, Director
Financial Markets and Community Investment

Enclosure

Example 4: Cover Letter for a Mail Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Mr. Oakland G. Machine
Election Marshal
Washington D.C. Elections Board
445 G St. NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Machine:

The Congress has asked the U.S. Government Accountability Office to review the election process across the country. To conduct this review, GAO is surveying a nationwide sample of local election jurisdictions about their experiences in the November 2008 general election. Your election jurisdiction has been randomly selected for this sample. Your jurisdiction's participation is important. Results from this review will help GAO inform the Congress as it deliberates a wide range of election reform issues.

The enclosed questionnaire should be completed by the people who know the most about how your jurisdiction conducted the general election voting on Election Day of November 2008. People completing the questionnaire should have knowledge of the following topics: (1) the voting system used, (2) staffing and training of poll workers, (3) Election Day vote-casting procedures and efforts to educate voters about these procedures, (4) how votes were tallied and certified, and (5) recount procedures.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope within 1 week of its receipt. If you have any questions, please contact Sara Boston at 202-512-5678 (BostonS@gao.gov) or Jane Alfred at 202-512-1000 (AlfredJ@gao.gov).

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,

Roland Stace, Director
Homeland Security and Justice

Enclosure

Example 5: Cover Letter for a Mail Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Leslie Smith
Controller
441 Biltmore Ave. NW
Tucson, AZ 85736

Dear Leslie Smith:

In preparing for reauthorization of the Airport Improvement Program, the Congress has asked the U.S. Government Accountability Office to review the National Airport System's (1) planned capital development and (2) financial resources to fund this development. Therefore, GAO, an audit and evaluation arm of the U.S. Congress, is surveying approximately 300 small airports to obtain information on their finances and funding for capital development. The American Association of Airport Executives is notifying its members of the importance of participating in GAO's survey.

Your airport was randomly selected from a list of all general aviation and reliever airports in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. We will not release individually identifiable information from this survey unless compelled by law or required to do so by the Congress. While the survey results are generally provided in summary form, individual answers may be discussed in our report. But the report will not include any information about the financial condition of any individual airport.

Please return your completed questionnaire within 10 working days from its receipt or by January 30, 2009. A timely response will help GAO avoid costly follow-up. You may return the questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope or by fax to GAO at 202-512-2502 or 202-512-2514. If the envelope is misplaced, please send your questionnaire to David Lehrer, GAO, 200 W. Adams Street, Suite 700, Chicago, IL 60606-5219.

If you have any questions or wish to confirm that we have received your completed questionnaire, please contact Raymond Smith at 202-512-7777 (SmithR@gao.gov) or Douglas Laine at 312-212-7660 (LaineD@gao.gov).

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Drake, Assistant Director
Physical Infrastructure Issues

Enclosure

Activation E-mail Messages for Web-Based and MS Word Electronic Questionnaire Surveys

When a Web-based survey is activated, an e-mail message is sent to potential respondents, informing them that the questionnaire is now available for them to complete. The activation e-mail message also mentions the earlier notification e-mail message, briefly reminding potential respondents of the purpose and importance of the survey. In addition, the e-mail message tells the respondents how to access the survey’s Web site, provides a user name and password for logging on to the site, gives a deadline or time period for completing the questionnaire, and includes the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of GAO contacts if they have questions or problems with the questionnaire.

For MS WEQs, the same information is provided, except that the message includes instructions about opening and completing the questionnaire, which is sent as an attachment to the e-mail message.

Guidelines

The following guidelines outline the basic elements of a well-structured activation e-mail message to introduce a Web-based questionnaire or MS WEQ. Two examples of activation e-mail messages are provided.

Element	Guidelines
Date	Spells out rather than abbreviates the month, for example, December 12, 2009
Address and salutation	“Dear (Name):” — <i>[Optional]</i>
Introductory paragraph	Identifies GAO and its legitimate role in collecting survey data, for example, “The Congress asked GAO to do this study.”
Midparagraphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States the survey’s purpose and the importance of responding • Describes any potential benefit to respondents • May include a confidentiality statement or a description of how data will be presented in GAO’s report • Indicates who may be the appropriate person to respond and that consultation with others possessing specific knowledge may be beneficial • Gives the time it will take to complete the questionnaire (assuming that we can provide an estimate that is sufficiently accurate to not weaken credibility with respondents) • Provides information on when we would like the questionnaire returned, either by a specific date or within a time period (for example, within 1 week of receiving the questionnaire)
GAO contacts	Provides contacts for respondents’ queries: two names, if possible, with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
Instructions <i>[For Web-based surveys]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the survey URL and the respondent’s username and password • Provides instructions about how to log in to the Web-based questionnaire • Should include an indication that our Web server is secure
Instructions <i>[For MS Word electronic questionnaires]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes that the questionnaire is an attachment to the e-mail message • Explains that the questionnaire can be completed electronically, saved as a Word file on the respondent’s computer, and returned to GAO by e-mail
Conclusion	Expresses appreciation, for example, “Thank you in advance for your assistance.”
Signature	A GAO staff person with authority

Example 6: Activation E-Mail Message for a Web-based Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Dear Mr. Harris: *[Optional]*

The U.S. Government Accountability Office’s Web-based survey of state workforce administrators is now ready for you to complete. As noted in our earlier e-mail message to you, the Jobs for Veterans Act includes a mandate that GAO study the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) (P.L. 107-288). An important component of this study is a survey of state workforce administrators in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to obtain their views on the implementation of the act.

Your participation is important, so we urge you to complete the questionnaire. We need your input to provide the Congress with meaningful information on the status of the JVA.

When responding, you may consult with others who are also familiar with this topic, if you think it will help you give a more accurate answer. To assist you in consulting with others, as soon as you open the survey web site indicated below, you will see a link enabling you to print a blank copy of the questionnaire. In testing this questionnaire, we found that it took about 1 hour to complete.

How to begin filling out the questionnaire:

The secure Web site containing the questionnaire along with the user name and password needed for access are listed below. You will need this information now and any other time you access the questionnaire.

Survey Web site: <https://websurveys.gao.gov/administratorsurvey>

User Name: gao123

Password: 87534

When you double click on the Web site indicated above, a screen containing introductory information and a "Start log in" button will appear. Clicking on "Start log in" will activate the log-in screen where you can enter your unique username and password.

After entering your username and password, click on the "Log in" button, and your browser will take you directly to the questionnaire.

If you cannot access the survey Web site directly by clicking on the address above, we suggest that you open up your Web browser and either type or paste the survey address in the "Address" text box (toward the top of your browser screen). Then, click on "Start log in" and the log-in screen should appear.

Please complete the questionnaire within 2 weeks of receiving this e-mail message. If you have questions about any procedure or if you need additional time, please contact either William Conner at 202-512-0999 (ConnerW@gao.gov) or Joy Booth at 202-512-0009 (BoothJ@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Drake, Assistant Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

} *[Electronic signature optional]*

Example 7: Accompanying E-Mail Message for an MS Word Electronic Questionnaire Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Dear Mr. Harris: *[Optional]*

The U.S. Government Accountability Office is conducting a survey of state workforce administrators. As noted in our earlier e-mail message, the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) includes a mandate that GAO study the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107-288). An important component of this study is a survey of state workforce administrators in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to obtain their views on the implementation of the act.

Our questionnaire is in the form of an MS Word document attached to this e-mail message. It can be completed on your computer. Instructions are included below.

When responding, you may consult with others who are also familiar with this topic, if you think it will help you give a more accurate answer. To assist you in consulting with others, we suggest that you print out a copy of the questionnaire.

Your participation is important so please complete the questionnaire. We need your input to provide the Congress with meaningful information on the status of the JVA.

How to begin filling out the questionnaire:

This questionnaire can be completed on your computer. To do this, first open the attached MS Word file and save the file to your computer. Then enter your responses directly to the saved document. More detailed instructions about completing the questionnaire and returning it to GAO are found on page 1 of the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire within 2 weeks of receiving this e-mail message. If you have questions about any procedure or if you need additional time, please contact either William Conner at 202-512-0999 (ConnerW@gao.gov) or Joy Booth at 202-512-0009 (BoothJ@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Drake, Assistant Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

} *[Electronic signature optional]*

Follow-Up Letters and E-Mail Messages

Follow-up letters for all types of surveys are sent to those who have not responded at some point after the initial mailing or activation. The timing of the follow-up messages depends on the questionnaire delivery method (that is, mail versus e-mail) and the time period allotted respondents to complete the questionnaire. Depending on the response rate and the time allotted to complete data collection, you may want to send more than one follow-up letter or e-mail message.

In this follow-up communication, note that GAO has not yet received a completed questionnaire, repeat the survey’s purpose, and stress the importance of responding. In addition, note that GAO is sending another copy of the paper questionnaire (for mail surveys); the survey URL and the respondent’s username and password (for Web-based surveys); or another file containing the MS WEQ (for WEQ surveys).

Guidelines

The guidelines described and illustrated here give the basic elements of a well structured follow-up letter or e-mail message. Three examples of follow-up correspondence are provided.

Element	Guidelines
Date	Spells out rather than abbreviates the month, for example, December 12, 2009
Salutation	“Dear (Name):” <i>[Optional in e-mail message]</i>
Introductory paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminds recipient of the letter or e-mail message that GAO sent an earlier letter or e-mail message about this survey Briefly identifies GAO again and repeats the survey’s purpose
Mid-paragraph(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indicates that we have not yet received a response Urges participation and stresses the importance of the survey Notes that the respondent may have recently mailed or e-mailed the questionnaire or may be in the process of completing it and, if so, may disregard this notice Indicates that the respondent may have completed the questionnaire but may have forgotten to answer the last question indicating that the Web-based questionnaire has been completed and is ready for submission to GAO^a <i>[Web-based surveys only]</i>
GAO contacts	Provides contacts for respondents’ questions, two names, if possible, with telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses
Instructions <i>[for Web-based surveys only]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists the survey URL and provides the respondents their username and password Provides instructions about how to log in to the Web-based questionnaire
Instructions <i>[for MS Word electronic questionnaires only]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes that the questionnaire is an attachment to the e-mail message Explains that the questionnaire can be saved as a Word file on the respondent’s computer, completed electronically, and returned to GAO by e-mail
Time	Indicates that time is running out to complete the questionnaire and requests that the questionnaire be completed by a specific date or within a specific time period

^a Web-based questionnaires always contain a final question asking if the questionnaire has been completed and is being officially submitted to GAO. The answer to this question determines whether follow-up e-mails are sent. It is suggested that this question be numbered so that it can be referred to by number in any e-mail. Suggested wording for this question follows:

27. Are you ready to submit your final completed questionnaire to GAO at this time?
(This is equivalent to mailing a completed paper questionnaire to us. It tells us that your answers are official and final. Follow-up e-mails will not be sent to those who answer "Yes" below.)

- Yes, the questionnaire is complete and being officially submitted.
- No, the questionnaire is not yet complete.

Conclusion	Expresses appreciation, for example, “Thank you in advance for your assistance.”
Signature	A GAO staff person with authority. <i>[Optional in e-mail message]</i>

Example 8: First Follow-Up Letter for a Mail Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Mr. Leonard Landowner
Real Estate Regulator
Real Estate Regulatory Agency
444 G St. NW
Youngstown, OH 44451

Dear Mr. Landowner:

About 2 weeks ago, we sent you a copy of the enclosed questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect information on the states’ regulation of real estate appraisers. This questionnaire is part of a study that the U.S. Government Accountability Office has been asked to do by the Congress on state regulatory practices for real estate appraisers and on the relationship between the state regulatory agencies and regulatory bodies.

As of today, we have not received your completed questionnaire. If you have already mailed it or are in the process of completing it, please disregard this letter and accept our thanks for your help. If you have not yet returned the questionnaire, please do so as soon as possible. Your response is essential. We need to hear from as many states as possible so that the information that we provide to the Congress will be as complete as possible.

Please return your completed questionnaire, in the enclosed postage-paid envelope, no later than January 22, 2009. If you have any questions or comments about this questionnaire, please contact Dennis Norton at 202-512-0001 (NortonD@gao.gov) or Allen G. Martin at 415-904-0002 (MartinA@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

David F. Smith, Director
Financial Markets and Community Investment

Enclosures

Example 9: First Follow-Up E-Mail Message for a Web-Based Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Dear Mr. Harris: *[Optional]*

About a week ago, we sent you an e-mail message about a Web-based survey that the U.S. Government Accountability Office is conducting regarding issues related to the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) (P.L. 107-288). You received our questionnaire because you were identified as your state's contact for addressing questions on this topic.

According to our records, you have not yet completed the questionnaire. We realize that you are busy, but in order for us to provide the most accurate and complete information to the Congress, we must have responses from as many states as possible. The survey will be closing out soon. Please respond no later than January 22, 2009.

Note: If you already answered all the questions, you may be receiving this message because you did not indicate in the last question (that is, question 27) that your questionnaire is complete and is being officially submitted. If this is the case, please log on, go to question 27, and mark the "questionnaire is complete" response. Thank you for your help.

How to begin filling out the questionnaire:

The secure Web site containing the questionnaire along with the user name and password needed to access it are listed below. You will need this information now and any other time you access the questionnaire.

Survey Web site: <https://websurveys.gao.gov/administratorsurvey>

User Name: gao123

Password: 87534

When you double click on the Web site indicated above, a screen containing introductory information and a "Start log in" button will appear. Clicking on "Start log in" will activate the log-in screen where you can enter your unique username and password.

After entering your username and password, click on "Log in" and your browser will take you directly to the questionnaire.

If you cannot access the survey Web site directly by clicking on the address above, we suggest that you open up your Web browser and either type or paste the survey address in the "Address" text box (toward the top of your browser screen). Then, click on "Start log in" and the log-in screen should appear.

If you have questions about any procedure or if you need additional time, please contact either William Conner at 202-512-0999 (ConnerW@gao.gov) or Joy Booth at 202-512-0009 (BoothJ@gao.gov).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Drake, Assistant Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

} *[Electronic signature optional]*

Example 10: First Follow-Up E-Mail Message for an MS Word Electronic Survey



**United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548**

January 10, 2009

Dear Mr. Harris: *[Optional]*

About a week ago, we sent you an e-mail message about a survey that the U.S. Government Accountability Office is conducting about issues related to the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) (PL 107-288). You received the e-mail message because you were identified as your state's contact for addressing questions on this topic.

According to our records, you have not yet completed the questionnaire. We realize that you are busy, but in order for us to provide the most accurate and complete information to the Congress, we must have responses from as many states as possible. The survey will be closing out soon. Please respond no later than January 22, 2009.

We are sending another copy of our questionnaire, in the form of an MS Word document, attached to this e-mail message. It can be completed on your computer. To do this, first open the attached MS Word file and save the file to your computer. Then enter your responses directly to the saved document. More detailed instructions about completing the questionnaire and returning it to us are found on page 1 of the questionnaire.

If you have questions about any procedure or if you need additional time, please contact either William Conner at 202-512-0999 (ConnerW@gao.gov) or Joy Booth at 202-512-0009 (BoothJ@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Drake, Assistant Director
Education, Workforce, and Income Security

} *[Electronic signature optional]*

Subsequent Follow-Up Letters and E-Mail Messages

The content of subsequent follow-up letters and e-mail messages is similar to the first follow-up correspondence. Differences are in the first paragraph or two. The following examples 11a, 11b, and 11c show these introductory paragraphs:

Example 11a. Subsequent follow-up letter for a mail questionnaire, first three paragraphs

Over the past several weeks, we have sent you two copies of the enclosed questionnaire in order to collect information on the states' regulation of real estate appraisers. This questionnaire is part of a study that the U.S. Government Accountability Office has been asked to do by the Congress on state regulatory practices for real estate appraisers and the relationship between the state regulatory agencies and regulatory bodies.

As of today, we have not received your completed questionnaire. If you have already mailed it or are in the process of completing it, please disregard this letter and accept our thanks for helping us. If you have not yet returned the questionnaire, we hope that you will do so as soon as possible.

As noted in our earlier letter, your response is essential. We need responses to our survey from all 50 states so that we can provide the Congress with complete and comprehensive information on this topic.

Example 11b. Subsequent follow-up e-mail message for a Web-based questionnaire, first four paragraphs

Over the past several weeks, we have sent you a number of e-mail messages about a Web-based survey that the U.S. Government Accountability Office is conducting on issues related to the implementation of the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA) (P.L. 107-288). You received this questionnaire because you were identified as your state's contact for addressing questions on this topic.

According to our records, you have not yet completed the questionnaire. We realize that you are busy, but in order for us to provide the most accurate and complete information to the Congress, it is essential that we have responses from as many states as possible.

The survey will be closing out on February 1, 2009. Please complete the questionnaire by that date.

Note: If you already answered all the questions, you may be receiving this message because you did not indicate in the last question (that is, question number 27) that your questionnaire is complete and is being officially submitted. If this is the case, please log on, go to question 27, and mark the "questionnaire is complete" response. Thank you for your help.

Example 11c. Subsequent follow-up e-mail messages for an MS Word electronic questionnaire, first four paragraphs

Over the past several weeks, we have sent you three copies of the attached questionnaire in order to collect information on the states' regulation of real estate appraisers. This questionnaire is part of a study that the U.S. Government Accountability Office has been asked to do by the Congress on (1) state regulatory practices for real estate appraisers and (2) the relationship between the state regulatory agencies and regulatory bodies.

As of today, we have not received your completed questionnaire. We realize that you are busy, but in order for us to provide the most accurate and complete information to the Congress, it is essential that we have responses from as many states as possible.

We are sending another copy of our questionnaire in the form of an MS Word document attached to this e-mail message. It can be completed on your computer. To do this, first open the attached MS Word file and save the file to your computer. Then enter your responses directly to the saved document. More detailed instructions about completing the questionnaire and returning it to GAO are found on page 1 of the questionnaire.

The survey will be closing out on February 1, 2009. Please complete the questionnaire by that date.

Questionnaire Introductory Section

The introduction on the first page of a mail - Web-based or MS Word electronic questionnaire - is needed in the event that (1) the respondent has lost the cover letter or e-mail message at the point of starting to answer the questions or (2) one or more of the respondents completing the questionnaire have never seen the cover letter or e-mail message.

This introduction should be as brief as possible so that respondents can begin answering the questions quickly, without being burdened with an overabundance of introductory material. The basic information to include is what the survey is about, instructions for completing and returning the questionnaire, and contact information in the event that respondent requires assistance. It is preferred that most of the information about the survey be included in the letter or e-mail message accompanying the questionnaire.

Guidelines

The guidelines described and illustrated here give the basic elements of a well-structured introduction for a mail questionnaire or an electronic questionnaire – Web-based or MS Word.

Element	Guidelines
Survey information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States the survey’s purpose and identifies GAO and its legitimate role in collecting survey data, for example, “The Congress asked GAO to do this study.” If it has been determined that a pledge of confidentiality should be offered, it should be included in the questionnaire introductory section.
Time estimate <i>[Optional]</i>	Estimated time required to complete the questionnaire.
Return deadline and other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questionnaire should not include a specific return date (for example, please return by January 10, 2009). If a specific return date is used, it should only appear on the accompanying cover letter or e-mail message. The questionnaire may include a return request in the form of an elapsed date from time of receipt (for example, within 2 weeks or within 10 business days). If this information is provided on the questionnaire, it should be consistent on all accompanying cover letters or e-mail messages. For mail surveys, (1) indicate that a return envelope has been provided to return the questionnaire and (2) provide the return address on the questionnaire in the event the envelope is misplaced. For MS Word electronic questionnaires, provide the name and e-mail address of the GAO staff person designated to receive the completed questionnaire.
Instructions <i>[For MS Word electronic questionnaires]</i>	Describes how to navigate through the questionnaire: (1) how to answer check box, fill-in-the-blank, and open-ended questions and (2) how to save and return the completed questionnaire to GAO.
GAO contact information <i>[For mail or MS Word electronic questionnaires]</i>	Provides GAO contacts for respondents’ questions—two names, if possible, with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
Instructions and GAO contact information <i>[For Web-based questionnaires]</i>	<p>For Web-based questionnaires, instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and GAO contact information are generally located in the “Navigation Instructions” screen that follows the “Introduction” screen.</p> <p>GAO contact information is also provided (1) in the “Hello” page that precedes the “Log in” screen and (2) by clicking on the “?” that appears at the bottom of each questionnaire screen.</p>
Conclusion	Expresses appreciation, for example, “Thank you for your assistance.”

Example 1: Introduction for a Mail Questionnaire



United States Government Accountability Office

Survey of States' Regulation of Real Estate Appraisers

Introduction

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has been asked by the Congress to study the states' regulation of real estate appraisers. For part of this study, GAO is asking agency officials who regulate real estate appraisers—in each state, territory, and the District of Columbia—to complete this questionnaire.

The questionnaire asks about state regulatory practices for real estate appraisers and how well these practices are working. It should take about 30 minutes to complete.

Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed prepaid envelope within 10 business days of receipt. In the event the envelope is misplaced, the return address is U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 6B17, Washington, DC 20548; Attention: Dennis Norton.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please call or e-mail Dennis Norton at 202-512-0001 (NortonD@gao.gov) or Allen G. Martin at 415-904-0002 (MartinA@gao.gov).

Thank you for your assistance.

Section I — State Qualifications for Real Estate Appraisers

1. Does your state ...

Example 2: Introduction Screen for a Web-based Questionnaire



G A O
Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office

Head Start Transportation Survey

Please note: You may need to use the scroll bar on the right-hand side of the screen to read all the information on a page.

You can exit the questionnaire at any time, but you must click on the "Exit" button at the bottom of the screen. This ensures that the information you entered for each section is saved.

Introduction

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), an agency of the Congress, is conducting a survey to obtain the experiences of Head Start programs with the Head Start transportation regulations made final on January 18, 2001. These regulations cover child restraint systems, bus monitors, vehicle specifications, and other requirements for Head Start programs that provide transportation services. Your responses, aggregated with the responses of other Head Start programs, will be included in our report to the Congress. We will not release individually identifiable information from this survey unless compelled by law or required to do so by the Congress.

Please complete this questionnaire within 2 weeks of receiving it. We understand that there are great demands on your time. However, your participation is essential for us to provide information to the Congress that will assist them in assessing the status of the Head Start transportation requirements and the need for any changes to them.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Next section >

Print

Exit

Example 3: Introduction for an MS Word Electronic Questionnaire



United States Government Accountability Office

**Survey of States on Administrative Costs
for the Child Support Enforcement Program**

Introduction

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), an agency of the United States Congress, is studying issues associated with administrative costs for the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program, including steps states have taken to reduce these costs.

As a part of this study, GAO is conducting a nationwide survey of the 54 CSE program directors. We appreciate your insights, as it is important for GAO to provide a national overview as well as a state-by-state perspective to the Congress.

Instructions

This questionnaire can be completed on your computer. To do this, first save this MS Word file containing the questionnaire to your computer. You may then enter your responses directly in that file.

Completing the questionnaire is very simple. There are only a few rules to follow.

- Please use your mouse to navigate by clicking on the field or check box you wish to answer.
- To select a check box, click on the center of the box and an “X” will appear.
- To change or deselect a check box response, click on the check box and the “X” will disappear.
- To answer a question that requires that you enter a number or write a comment, click on the answer box and begin typing. You may type as much as you wish. The box will expand to accommodate your answer.
- When your questionnaire has been completed, e-mail the MS Word file to Dennis Norton at NortonD@gao.gov.

Please complete the questionnaire within 10 business days of receiving it. We understand that there are great demands on your time; however, your response is crucial to provide important information to the Congress.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please call or e-mail Dennis Norton at 202- 512-0001 (NortonD@gao.gov) or Allen G. Martin at 415-904-0002 (MartinA@gao.gov).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Addressing Envelopes and Letters, Including Salutations for Cover Letters

Like you, GAO wants to project the best image possible. Addressing GAO's envelopes and letters in miscellaneous styles does not project as good an image as following specific conventions does. Such conventions help GAO project to the world a uniform, professional look. They also help you, since you do not have to reinvent the wheel each time you address a survey envelope or letter.

The address conventions in this appendix are to be used for surveys and other mass mailings. They include forms for envelope addresses, cover letter addresses, and cover letter salutations. They are based on GAO's preferences as well as the following resources:

- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- GAO, [Words@Work](#), See "Letters & Memos": "Standard Letters," "Guide to Addressing Letters."
- *New York Public Library Business Desk Reference* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999).
- U.S. Postal Service, <http://www.usps.com>.

In general, the address conventions reflect a formality appropriate to GAO's communications, but they also meet U.S. Postal Service conventions, for example, the capitalized abbreviations for states.

This appendix has three sections: (I) envelope addresses, (II) cover letter addresses, and (III) salutations for cover letters. Section I is divided into six subsections, one for each address line (subsections A–D) and two for foreign addresses (subsections E and F). Examples of almost all the conventions can be found on page 32.

I. Envelope Addresses

A. First line of address: Courtesy title, name, and professional degree

- ☐ Put the courtesy title before the full name
(*Mr., Mrs., or Ms.*):
- Ms.** Lillian Barrios-Paoli
Commissioner
Human Resources Administration
1 Church St.
New York, NY 10013
- ☐ If the person has a professional degree,
either put (1) the courtesy title before the
name or (2) the degree after the name.
But never do both:
- John O. Murrell, **Ph.D.**
Assistant Director, Art Services
Lynn Photo & Imaging Center
12860 Seventh St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001
- ☐ Use a period after an initial:
- John **O.** Murrell, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Art Services
Lynn Photo & Imaging Center
12860 Seventh St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001
- ☐ Do not insert a comma before *Jr.*
(restrictive):¹
- Mr. John **Brink Jr.**
Commissioner of Police
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038
- ☐ Insert a comma before *Ph.D.* and *M.D.*
(nonrestrictive):²
- John O. Murrell, **Ph.D.**
Assistant Director, Art Services
Lynn Photo & Imaging Center
12860 Seventh St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001
- Neal L. Cohen, **M.D.**
Commissioner
Department of Health
125 Fifty-seventh St., Room 331
New York, NY 10013-4006

¹*Jr.* is restrictive because it is essential to knowing which person is being addressed—here, John Brink Sr. or John Brink Jr.

²These professional degrees are nonrestrictive because they are not essential to knowing which person is being addressed. In this case, there is presumably only one John Murrell and one Neal Cohen and therefore the degrees are treated as parenthetical information, set off by commas.

Appendix

I. Envelope Addresses (*Continued*)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>☐ Use appropriate courtesy titles for members of the Congress and the military, Supreme Court Justices, and others:³</p> | <p>The Honorable Joseph C. Smith
United States Senate</p> |
| <p>☐ Omit the courtesy title if you do not know whether the addressee is a man or a woman:</p> | <p>Leslie Wilson
POB 20
U.S. Route 41
Mount Orange, NM 40007</p> |

B. Second or third line of address: Business title, if any; organization

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>☐ If the person is addressed with a business title, put the title on the second line and the organization name on the third line:</p> | <p>Neal L. Cohen, M.D.
Commissioner
Department of Health
125 Fifty-seventh St., Room 331
New York, NY 10013-4006</p> |
| <p>☐ If the person is not addressed with a business title, put the organization name on the second line:</p> | <p>Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr.
Macmillan Co., Inc.
255 East Bay Ave.
Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318</p> |
| <p>☐ <i>Bro., Bros., Co., Corp., Inc., Ltd.</i>, and the ampersand (&) are acceptable in organization names:</p> | <p>Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr.
Macmillan Co., Inc.
255 East Bay Ave.
Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318</p> |
| <p>☐ An ampersand (&) is acceptable in organization names but nowhere else:</p> | <p>John O. Murrell, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Art Services
Lynn Photo & Imaging Center
12860 Seventh St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001</p> |
| <p>☐ Put a comma before <i>Inc.</i> (nonrestrictive) unless the organization does not use it:</p> | <p>Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr.
Macmillan Co., Inc.
255 East Bay Ave.
Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318</p> |

³ GAO, [Words@Work/](#), “Guide to Addressing Letters” in the “Forms of Address” section contains courtesy titles for people in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the military services; the diplomatic corps; state and local governments; educational organizations; and ecclesiastical organizations; as well as for private citizens and groups.

Appendix

I. Envelope Addresses (Continued)

C. Third or fourth line of address: Street address

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☰ Use Arabic numerals for building numbers: | Ms. Lillian Barrios-Paoli
Commissioner
Human Resources Administration
1 Church St.
New York, NY 10013 |
| ☰ If a building name is the address, spell out the number: | Mr. John Brink Jr.
Commissioner of Police
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038 |
| ☰ Spell out streets numbered one hundred or less unless space is at a premium: | Neal L. Cohen, M.D.
Commissioner
Department of Health
125 Fifty-seventh St. , Room 331
New York, NY 10013-4006 |
| ☰ Abbreviate <i>NW</i> , <i>NE</i> , <i>SW</i> , and <i>SE</i> after street names: | John O. Murrell, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Art Services
Lynn Photo & Imaging Center
12860 Seventh St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001 |
| ☰ Spell out directions like <i>East</i> , <i>West</i> , <i>North</i> , and <i>South</i> : | Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr.
Macmillan Co., Inc.
255 East Bay Ave.
Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318 |
| ☰ Abbreviate <i>Ave.</i> , <i>Rd.</i> , <i>St.</i> , and other roadway designations: | Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr.
Macmillan Co., Inc.
255 East Bay Ave.
Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318 |
| ☰ Put <i>Room</i> , <i>Suite</i> , and like information on the same line as the building number and street if there is enough space: | Neal L. Cohen, M.D.
Commissioner
Department of Health
125 Fifty-seventh St., Room 331
New York, NY 10013-4006 |
| ☰ Abbreviate <i>Post Office</i> to PO Box or POB: | Leslie Wilson
POB 20
U.S. Route 41
Mount Orange, NM 40007 |

Appendix

I. Envelope Addresses (Continued)

D. Last line of U.S. address: City, state, and zip code

- ☰ Write out abbreviations such as *Mount* and *Fort* in city names:⁴

Leslie Wilson
POB 20
U.S. Route 41
Mount Orange, NM 40007

- ☰ Abbreviate state names to the two-letter form the U.S. government specifies for mailing (see *Chicago Manual of Style*, §15.29):

Leslie Wilson
POB 20
U.S. Route 41
Mount Orange, **NM** 40007

- ☰ Leave two letter spaces between state and zip code:

Leslie Wilson
POB 20
U.S. Route 41
Mount Orange, **NM 40007**

E. Foreign address: Fourth line

- ☰ Put the country's postal code on the fourth line, if that is the customary position for that country, followed by the city, state, or province:

Dr. Fred Whist
Bureau de Censu
13 rue des Beaux-Arts
81120 Paris
FRANCE

F. Foreign address: Last line

- ☰ Put the country's postal code on the last line, if that is the customary position for that country. Canada customarily allows two positions for the postal code—either the last line or after the city and province:

Ms. Helen Saunders
1010 Clear St.
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1A 0B1
or
Ms. Helen Saunders
1010 Clear St.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0B1
CANADA

- ☰ Put the country's name in upper case:

Dr. Fred Whist
Bureau de Censu
13 rue des Beaux-Arts
81120 Paris
FRANCE

⁴ *Saint*, as in *St. Louis* and *St. Petersburg*, is an exception.

II. Cover Letter Addresses

Follow the conventions for the envelope addresses described in section I, pages 27 to 30.

III. Cover Letter Salutations

Salutations are generally based on addresses

- ☞ Begin with *Dear*. Follow with the courtesy title and last name from the address and a colon: **Dear Dr. Murrell:**

- ☞ Begin with *Dear* and write out the full name with no courtesy title if you do not know whether the addressee is a man or a woman: **Dear Leslie Wilson:**

- ☞ Use appropriate salutations for members of the Congress and the military, Supreme Court Justices, and others:⁵ **Dear Senator Smith:**

⁵GAO, [Words@Work](#), “Guide to Addressing Letters” in the “Forms of Address” section contains courtesy titles for people in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the military services; the diplomatic corps; state and local governments; educational organizations; and ecclesiastical organizations; as well as for private citizens and groups.

Appendix

Examples

This page reproduces all the examples in this guide by their frequency of use.

Neal L. Cohen, M.D. Commissioner Department of Health 125 Fifty-seventh St., Room 331 New York, NY 10013-4006	The Honorable Joseph C. Smith United States Senate
John O. Murrell, Ph.D. Assistant Director, Art Services Lynn Photo & Imaging Center 12860 Seventh St. SW Washington, D.C. 20548-0001	Leslie Wilson POB 20 U.S. Route 41 Mount Orange, NM 40007
Mr. John Brink Jr. Commissioner of Police One Police Plaza New York, NY 10038	Ms. Helen Saunders 1010 Clear St. Ottawa, ON, Canada K1A OB1
Ms. Lillian Barrios-Paoli Commissioner Human Resources Administration 1 Church St. New York, NY 10013	Ms. Helen Saunders 1010 Clear St. Ottawa, ON K1A OB1 Canada
Mr. Carl V. Thulin Jr. Macmillan Co., Inc. 255 East Bay Ave. Manahawkin, NJ 08050-3318	Dr. Fred Whist Bureau de Census 13 rue des Beaux-Arts 81120 Paris FRANCE