Executive & General Correspondence Guidelines

JAY INSLEE
GOVERNOR

Introduction

Welcome to the Executive and General Correspondence Guidelines. Historically there have been two sets of guidelines. One set was authored by the Executive Assistants Group (EAG) and one by the Office of the Governor (GOV). In an effort to be more streamlined, efficient, and to simplify your work product, the EAG and GOV have collaborated and combined the guidelines.

- **SECTION 1** contains information about correspondence format, addresses and salutations, and mailing and writing tips.

- **SECTION 2** provides references for style, grammar, and usage.

In addition to these guidelines, you can find helpful information in the *Gregg Reference Manual* and the Governor's Plain Talk webpage: http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/efficient-government/plain-talk. We follow the *Gregg Reference Manual,* Tenth Edition. If there is a reference in these guidelines that deviates from *Gregg*, it will be clearly noted.

We hope you will find this document useful. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact the Executive Assistants Group at eag@executiveassistantsgroup.org or Krista Gobeille at krista.gobeille@gov.wa.gov.

Thank you for all of the good work you do for the citizens of the state of Washington.

Table of Contents

SECTION 1

SECTION 2

SECTION 1
Correspondence Formats and Tips

Letter Format

AGENCY LETTERHEAD

- Full-block style (See *Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1302(3)*).
- First page top margin: 2.25 inches.
- Bottom, left, right margins: 1 inch.
- Right margin not justified.
- Single space.
- Font: 12 point.
- For letters to be signed by the Governor, use Times New Roman.
- For letters to be signed by the Governor use two spaces after punctuation.
- The Washington-shaped logo is only used by the Governor's Office correspondence.

February 7, 2015 **4 Returns**¶
¶
¶
¶
The Honorable John Doe
U.S. House of Representatives
1234 Wisdom Street
Anytown, DC 99546 **2 Returns**¶
¶
Re: Anytown **2 Returns**¶
¶
Dear Congressman Doe: **2 Returns**¶
¶
Thank you for contacting my office. I appreciate hearing from you. **2 Returns**¶
¶
Views and comments such as yours frequently give my staff and me valuable insights into the important issues facing people in communities throughout our state. We rely on the calls and letters we receive to help us determine what is working and what isn't, and where we need to concentrate our efforts. **2 Returns**¶
¶
Again, thank you for contacting me about this matter. We will certainly consider your message, and look forward to hearing from you if you have further questions or comments. **2 Returns**¶
¶
Sincerely, **4 Returns**¶
¶
¶
¶
Joe Director (Do not type name in all caps)
Title **2 returns**¶
¶
Enclosures (2) **2 returns**¶
¶
cc: Jane Doe, President, DOE Enterprises

- For letters to be signed by the Governor, he prefers:
    Very truly yours,
- For signature use:
    Jay Inslee
    Governor
- A letter to be signed by the Governor should not contain the initials of the person who typed it.

- Enclosure is used for letters.
- Attachment is used for memos.
- In *Gregg*, the *re:* line is below the salutation - we show it above the salutation, which is the common practice.

Continuation Pages

The Honorable John Doe
February 7, 2013 (Make sure date is before the page number)
Page 2 (Page number should be in numeric format) **2 returns**¶
¶

> - Use plain paper (not letterhead).
> - Top margin: 1 inch.

(In *Gregg*, the positions of the date and page number are reversed. Our example shows the common practice.)

Memo Format

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

AGENCY LETTERHEAD

> - First page top margin: 2.25 inches.
> - Bottom, left, right margins: 1 inch.
> - Right margin not justified.
> - Single space.
> - Font: 12 point.
> - For Governor's correspondence, use Times New Roman.
> - For Governor's correspondence use two spaces after punctuation.
> - Washington-shaped logo on letterhead is only for Governor's Office correspondence.

February 7, 2015 **4 Returns**¶
¶
¶
¶
TO: State Agency Directors **2 Returns**¶
¶
FROM: Joe Director, Title **2 Returns**¶
¶
SUBJECT: 2013 Washington State Employee Appreciation **3 Returns**¶
¶
¶
Thank you for contacting my office. I appreciate hearing from you. **2 Returns**¶
¶
Views and comments such as yours frequently give my staff and me valuable insights into the important issues facing people in communities throughout our state. We rely on the calls and letters we receive to help us determine what is working and what isn't, and where we need to concentrate our efforts. **2 Returns**¶
¶
Again, thank you for contacting me about this matter. We will certainly consider your message, and look forward to hearing from you if you have further questions or comments. **4 Returns**¶
¶
¶
¶Attachments (3) **2 Returns**

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

cc: Jane Doe

Address/Salutation Formats

Do not abbreviate a person's title – use Chief Executive Officer instead of CEO; Corporal Jack Jones, not CPL Jack Jones, etc.

Envelopes should be printed in the same font as the letter, directly on the envelope.

City

The Honorable John Doe, Mayor City 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:

State

The Honorable Suzie Smith House of Representatives	Dear Representative Smith:
The Honorable John Doe State Senate	Dear Senator Doe:
The Honorable Jay Inslee Governor of Washington	Dear Governor Inslee:
The Honorable Kim Wyman Secretary of State	Dear Secretary Wyman:

Federal

The Honorable Patty Murray U.S. Senate	Dear Senator Murray:
The Honorable John Doe U.S. House of Representatives	Dear Congressman/woman Doe:

Tribal

The Honorable John Doe Quinault Nation	Dear Chairman/woman Doe:

Tips for Mailing

Envelopes

- Envelopes should be printed in the same font as the letter, directly on the envelope.

- The United States Postal Services provides these guidelines:
  - All capital letters
  - No punctuation
  - At least 10-point type
  - One space between city and state
  - Two spaces between state and ZIP Code

- 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

Do not show a person's title and office on the same line.

Do	Don't
John Doe Chief of Staff Office of the Governor **OR** John Doe, Chief of Staff Office of the Governor	John Doe Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor

- For District of Columbia, use DC (USPS, Appendix B).

- In order to determine whether to use No. or the pound sign (#), see *Gregg,* 455 and 1369(g). If using the pound sign there should be one space between the symbol and the number.
  618 OHIO AVENUE # 513

- Spell out numbers 1 through 10
  177 SECOND AVENUE

- Use figures for numbers over 10
  - **144 65th STREET**

- If an address contains a string of numbers, do not put a dash between them (*Gregg* p. 385; USPS 222):
  - **12345 14th AVENUE**

Window Envelopes

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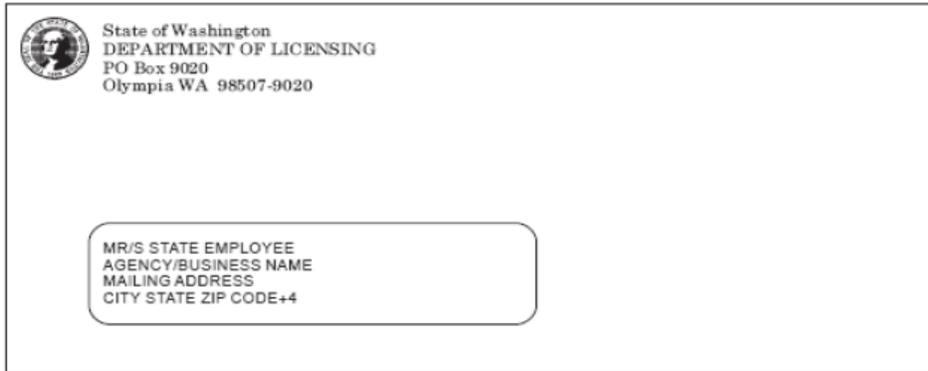
Campus Mail
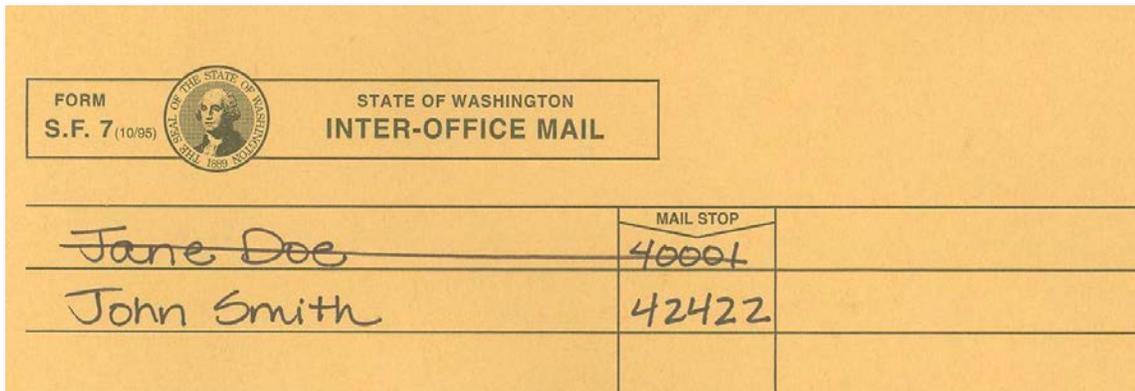
Foreign Mail

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	Canada
MR/S CUSTOMER	**MR/S CUSTOMER**
123 JONES STREET	**123 JONES STREET**
BOTUCATU SAO PAULO	**VICTORIA Z4C 286**
BRAZIL	**CANADA**

Tips for Letter-Writing

General Guidelines

- State the purpose of the letter in the first paragraph.

- Double check spelling of names and addresses.

- Be conservative in the use of acronyms.

- Keep letters to one page if at all possible. The Governor prefers Times New Roman 12 font, side and bottom margins of 1 inch, and a top margin of 2.25 inches. However, you can revert to 11.5 font, side margins of .75, a top margin of 2, and a bottom margin of .5 in order to fit a letter on one page.

- Plurals Agreement: Your dedication to children, families, and your community **is** greatly appreciated. Your energy and dedication to your community **are** greatly appreciated.

- Double check subject-verb agreement.

- Redundancies: Do not repeat the same word or phrase several times in the same sentence, paragraph, or letter, if at all possible.

- Use the active voice. Avoid the passive voice.
  - *Active:* **I believe . . .**
  - *Passive:* **It is believed . . .**

Courtesy Copy Notations

- Type *cc* at the left margin, followed by a colon. Your word processing program may automatically change it to a *Cc*. Make sure you use two lowercase letters.

- If you are sending a copy to only one person, insert 2 spaces between the colon and the person's name.
  - **cc: John Doe**

- If you are sending copies to multiple people, insert a tab after the colon in order to start all the names at the same point.
  - **cc: John Doe**
  - **Jane Doe**

Followed by name, title, and agency (title isn't always necessary, but the rest are). An example of a correct notation is:
  - ***cc: Joby Shimomura, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor***

- Courtesy copy notations should be listed in this order:
  - U.S. Senators & Representatives
  - Governors
  - State Senators
  - State Representatives
  - Other Elected Officials
  - Agency Directors (secretaries or commissioners)
  - Private Citizens
  - Governor's Staff

- "In care of" notations should contain a lowercase c, slash, and lowercase o (*Gregg,* 1325). (Word processing programs will incorrectly auto-capitalize the c.)

  > **Professor James Smith**
  > **c/o Mr. Henry Jones**

Preparing a Letter for the Governor's Signature

- The Governor prefers certain openings and closings to a letter:

  Examples of preferred openings include:
  > Thank you for your recent letter regarding . . .
  > I respectfully request your consideration of . . .
  > I support Washington State's application for . . .

  Examples of preferred closings include:
  > Again, thank you for contacting me about . . .
  > Thank you for your consideration.

- Avoid the phrases "I feel" and "I think." The Governor prefers "I believe" and "I am confident."

- Watch out for the collective "we." Letters should sound as if the Governor wrote them himself. In general, "I" is preferred. Also, "I understand" should be used when an agency has provided the Governor with certain information or statistics.

- Passive/Weak Voice

  PASSIVE: Tomorrow, I will be announcing a revolutionary new program.
  PREFERRED: Tomorrow, I will announce a revolutionary new program.

  PASSIVE: I am hoping to visit Spokane next week.
  PREFERRED: I hope to visit Spokane next week.

  WEAK: I wanted to tell you that our meeting has been canceled.
  PREFERRED: I regret to inform you that our meeting has been canceled. **OR** Our meeting has been canceled.

  WEAK: I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your many valuable contributions.
  PREFERRED: I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank you for your many valuable contributions. **OR** Thank you for your many valuable contributions.

- When including a phone or fax number, use parentheses to separate the area code from the phone or fax number. Example: (360) 123-4567. *Gregg* recommends use of hyphens (*Gregg,* 454(c)).

SECTION 2
References

Introduction

This section contains references for common questions regarding style, grammar, and usage. For more references, see:

- *The Gregg Reference Manual*

- *The Bluebook, a Uniform System of Citation*

- Governor's Plain Talk Website: http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/efficient-government/plain-talk

Word Usage

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

Word Usage	Examples
Agencywide is one word, not hyphenated.	
A lot (**NOT:** alot) Many or much.	Thanks *a lot* for your help.
Affect-Effect *Affect vt.* To influence. Effect *n.* Result; *vt.* To bring about.	The storm may *affect* our schedule. It will be months before we can assess the full *effect* [result] of the new law. It is essential that we *effect* [bring about] an immediate improvement in sales.
Allot *vt.* To assign a portion for a particular purpose.	You will have to *allot* a portion of the budget to cover unforeseen expenses.
a.m./p.m. Always lowercase with periods.	
Assure *vt.* To inform confidently; to cause to feel sure. *Assure, ensure, and insure* all mean "to make certain." Only *assure* is used to refer to a person in the sense of "set the mind at rest."	I want to *assure* you that nothing will go wrong.
Ensure *vt.* To make certain.	I want to *ensure* that nothing can go wrong tomorrow.
Insure *vt.* To cover with insurance; to make certain or secure.	I want to *insure* this necklace for $5,000.
In regards to. Substitute *in regard to, with regard to, regarding,* or *as regards*	I am writing *in regard to* your letter of May 1.
Its-it's. *Its* is a possessive pronoun. *It's* stands for "it is" or "it has."	The company must protect *its* assets. *It's* time to go to the meeting.
Per-a. *Per* is often used to mean "by the," as in *28 miles per gallon*. Whenever possible, substitute *a* or *an*; for example, *$8 an hour*.	
Percent is always spelled out as one word.	
Principal-Principle. *Principal adj.* Foremost in importance; *n.* One who holds of post of presiding rank; sum of money invested. *Principle n.* A basic law or rule; Moral or ethical standards	*adj.* My *principal* reason for quitting *n.* The *principal* of the school; receiving an excellent return on my *principal* A key *principle* of economics; a person of *principle*
Statewide is one word not hyphenated.	
Which-that. *Which* and *that* are used when referring to places, objects, and animals. *Which* is always used to introduce nonessential clauses, and *that* is ordinarily used to introduce essential clauses.	See *Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1062*
Who-that. *Who* and *that* are used when referring to persons.	See Gregg, Tenth Edition, 1062
Who's-whose. *Who's* stands for "who is" or "who has." *Whose* is the possessive form of who.	*Who's* going to the meeting? *Whose* notes are these?

Capitalization

Refrain from over-capitalization, especially in instances such as "This program has proved to be extremely valuable." Do not capitalize "program" in that sentence.

- **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, 2010 Legislative Session, Congress, Senate, House, House of Representatives:** always capitalized.

- **legislative, legislator, legislation:** not capitalized.

- **senator, representative:** Do not capitalize unless senator and representative precede a name.

- **state: capitalize only when it follows the name of a state.**
  Washington State
  the state of Washington

Citations

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

Numbers

Basic Form

- Spell out numbers ten and under. Use figures for numbers over ten.
  - **five requests**   **35 employees**

- Spell out a number that begins a sentence, as well as any related numbers.
  - **Eight hundred employees worked that day.**

- Express numbers in the millions or higher as a combination of words and figures.
  - **45 million**   **2.4 billion**

Ordinal Numbers

- Spell out ordinal numbers that can be expressed in one or two words.
  - **eighth grade**   **forty-first reunion**

Age

- Use figures (including 1 through 10) if the age is used as a significant statistic.
  - **Joe Smith was 41 years old when he was injured.**
  - **The claimant is a 23-year-old man.**

- Spell out in formal writing.
  - **My son is three years old.**

Dates

- When the day *precedes* the month or *stands alone*, use ordinal figures or words.

  The claimant was hospitalized from Monday, the 2d of August, through Thursday, the 5th.

- When the day follows the month, use cardinal figures.

  August 13, 1992 **February 1993**

- Do not use a comma when writing only the month and year.

  August 1990

- Do not separate the month from the day at the end of a line of text.

Percentages

- Use figures and always spell out percent.

  18 percent **1 percent**

Money

- Use figures for exact or approximate amounts of money.

  $5.60 **$125**
  over $1500 **$44 million**
  30 cents **$44,345,478**

Clock Time

- Always use figures with *a.m.* or *p.m.* For time "on the hour," zeros are not needed. Do not use *a.m.* or *p.m.* with *o'clock*.

  4:30 p.m. **3:30 to 6 p.m.**

- *Noon* and *midnight* may be expressed in words alone. However, use the forms *12 noon* and *12 midnight* when the times are given with other times expressed in figures.

  12 noon **4:30 p.m.**

Plurals

Do	Don't
Sixes and Sevens **6s and 7s**	**6's and 7's**

Fiscal Years

Fiscal Year 2005-06 **2005-2006 fiscal period**

FTE Staff Years

3.1 FTE staff years **3.1 FTEs**

Americans with Disabilities Act

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
>Washington School for the Blind, Braille Access Center: www.wssb.org