

(Sample Transmittal Memo for White House)

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: (Insert Name of Current White House Aid)
Presidential Letters and Messages, Correspondence Room 93-OEOB

Subject: White House Referral – Charlie Fish – WH ID#059159

In response to subject referral dated June 12, 2004, attached is a draft reply to an April 25, 2004, letter from Mr. Charlie Fish of Portland, Oregon, pertaining to the exercise of Indian treaty rights in the State of Oregon. The draft reply is identical to many others transmitted in recent weeks.

(Insert Name of Current Assistant Secretary)
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Attachment

(Sample of Draft White House Letter)

DRAFT

Dear Mr. Fish:

Thank you for your recent letter in which you suggested that certain areas within the National Park system be designated for use by Indian tribes for the establishment of traditional communities.

The National Parks were established for the primary purpose of preserving outstanding natural and historical areas for public enjoyment and understanding of the resources of these areas. American Indians, of course, have the same rights to use the parks for recreation as do other citizens. In addition, it is the policy of the National Park Service to administer the lands under its jurisdiction in a manner that reflects informed awareness, sensitivity, and concern for the traditions, cultural values, and religious beliefs of American Indians and other Native Americans with ancestral ties to such lands.

Arrangements can be made for the non-recreational use of National Park lands by American Indians if such use would not conflict with the purposes for which a particular park was established and if park resources are adequately protected. We believe that it is best for such arrangements to be negotiated between the concerned Indians and local park officials on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you again for your suggestion.

Sincerely,

Morton Blackwell

Mr. Charlie Fish
934 North Benton Way
Los Angeles, California 90026

DOI, James Brown, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Room 4555, 123-4567

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Joe Skeen
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Skeen:

The Fiscal Year 2001 Senate Report (Report No. 106-221) accompanying the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill contained the following language concerning Federal funds provided to the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma:

“The Committee recognizes the concerns of several tribes located within the jurisdictional service area of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma regarding federally funded services tribal members currently receive from the Cherokee Nation. However, the Committee is concerned that there is no additional funding to make available to provide separate service funding for each tribe wishing to provide services to its members. The Committee is also concerned about the potential for duplication of services to individuals and the loss of economies of scale where facilities and programs exist that cannot readily be split between tribes.

In order to address these concerns, the Committee hereby requests that all tribal entities located within the service area of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma work with the Department to develop a plan for their continued operations including expenditures of Federal grant moneys, geographical areas eligible for application for trust land status, and independent recognition as tribes. The Department shall report the results of this process to the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on or before April 1, 2001.”

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provided the enclosed report with a summary of the issues and the status of their efforts. They will continue to facilitate discussions among the three tribes and keep the Committees informed of their progress.

A similar letter is being sent to The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, and to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

Sincerely,

(Type Full Name of Incumbent)
Assistant Secretary
Policy, Management and Budget

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Norman Dicks
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Interior and
Related Agencies

The Honorable Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Resources

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Resources

- REPROGRAMMING REQUESTS AND RESPONSES TO CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVES INCLUDED IN APPROPRIATIONS REPORTS ARE SIGNED BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY - PMB.
- ORIGINAL LETTERS ARE SENT TO BOTH THE HOUSE AND SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMEN WITH COPIES TO THE RANKING MINORITY MEMBERS.
- DEPENDING UPON EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT, COPIES MAY ALSO BE SENT TO THE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBERS OF THE AUTHORIZING COMMITTEES.
- THE LAST PARAGRAPH NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN ALL REPROGRAMMING AND CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVE LETTERS (UPDATED, AS APPROPRIATE, FOR CURRENT SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMEN).
- THE NEXT LETTER IS THE SENATE COUNTERPART TO THIS LETTER.

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Illustration 2-5

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Byrd:

The fiscal year 2001 Senate Report (Report No. 106-221) accompanying the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill contained the following language concerning Federal funds provided to the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma:

“The Committee recognizes the concerns of several tribes located within the jurisdictional service area of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma regarding federally funded services tribal members currently receive from the Cherokee Nation. However, the Committee is concerned that there is no additional funding to make available to provide separate service funding for each tribe wishing to provide services to its members. The Committee is also concerned about the potential for duplication of services to individuals and the loss of economies of scale where facilities and programs exist that cannot readily be split between tribes.

In order to address these concerns, the Committee hereby requests that all tribal entities located within the service area of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma work with the Department to develop a plan for their continued operations including expenditures of Federal grant moneys, geographical areas eligible for application for trust land status, and independent recognition as tribes. The Department shall report the results of this process to the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on or before April 1, 2001.”

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provided the enclosed report with a summary of the issues and the status of their efforts. They will continue to facilitate discussions among the three tribes and keep the Committees informed of their progress.

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

A similar letter is being sent to The Honorable Joe Skeen, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, and to the Resources Committee of the House.

Sincerely,

(Type Full Name of Incumbent)
Assistant Secretary
Policy, Management and Budget

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Conrad Burns
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Interior
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Committee on Indian Affairs

The Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Vice Chairman, Committee on Indian Affairs

- LETTERS IN RESPONSE TO CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVES ALWAYS QUOTE THE APPLICABLE DIRECTIVE.
- AS THESE LETTERS ARE SIGNED BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, PMB, THE LETTER ITSELF IS GENERAL AND THE DETAILED REPORT OR OTHER INFORMATION IS INCLUDED AS AN ENCLOSURE.
- THE DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT WILL ACCEPT EITHER “HONORABLE” OR “THE HONORABLE” WHEN WRITING TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, HOWEVER, THE DOI CONGRESSIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS OFFICE APPEARS TO INSIST ON “HONORABLE.”

Chapter 3— Letter Format

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

This chapter gives the format for preparing letters to be signed in Indian Affairs. Letters are used for correspondence with addressees outside the Department. Tribal councils or committees are considered addressees outside the Department; therefore, letters may be addressed directly to them or their members.

A sample of a General Format for Letters is shown in Illustration 3-1 at the end of this chapter.

Letterhead

For all correspondence that will be sent outside the Department, use correct stationery as follows:

SIGNATURE	LETTERHEAD	SUCCEEDING PAGES
Secretary	Personal Stationery*	Matching cream-colored stationery
Assistant Secretary	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
Deputy Assistant Secretary	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
Office Directors reporting to one of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
All BIA Officials	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Plain white bond

*The Secretary's personal stationery may be obtained from IA-ES or ES-SIO.

Format

Formatting is the art of making your document look more pleasing to the reader. The following standards give how to format text, characters, paragraphs, sentences, and entire documents:

Font

Use Arial 12 point, Times New Roman 12 point, Courier 12 point, or a similar font that is easy to read and presents a professional appearance.

Justification

Either full justification or left hand justification is acceptable. Use only left justification when preparing letters for the Secretary's signature.

Margins

- (1) **Top:** Allow at least 3 inches on the letterhead page between the top of the page and the inside address and 1 inch on following pages.
- (2) **Left, Right, and Bottom:** 1 inch. Left and right margins may be 1½ inches if the letter is short.
- (3) When a letter is less than one page in length, side margins wider than 1 inch may be used for a more balanced look.

In Reply Refer To

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Used only on BIA letterhead. Type the title of the author's organization. In addition, include the IA-ES Control # for all controlled correspondence that will be signed in BIA.

Special Handling

If a letter will be subject to special mail handling, type the correct designation (SPECIAL DELIVERY; CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED; etc.) flush with the left margin above the inside address.

Administrative Restrictions

If access to the correspondence is to be limited, stamp or type the appropriate marking (FOR GOVERNMENT USE ONLY or ADMINISTRATIVELY RESTRICTED) above the letterhead and at the bottom of each page of the original and all copies.

Date

Omit the date and use a date stamp after the letter is signed.

Outside Address

Each line should be no more than 4 inches. If it is necessary to divide a title or the name of an organization, indent the second line two spaces and begin typing in the third space. The overall length of the address should be limited to five lines.

Attention

Avoid using an "Attention" line in letters. For congressional correspondence, include any requested "Attention" information only on the envelope.

Sentence

Never split a sentence between two pages. A sentence should average 15 – 20 words, and never longer than 40 words. Cut out words that aren't really necessary.

Paragraph

Use block format. Start a new paragraph near the end of a page only if at least two lines will fit on the first page and at least two lines will continue on to the following page. In all other cases, begin the new paragraph on the following page.

Paragraph Numbering

Paragraphs and subparagraphs may be numbered and lettered for clarity, if necessary. Most word processing software provides a number of options for numbering and lettering paragraphs and subparagraphs: use the style best suited to the correspondence.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Bullets

Bullets may be used in correspondence to be signed in Indian Affairs as an option to numbering and lettering paragraphs. Bullets are less formal than numbering and lettering but are appropriate when each of the “bulleted” items is of equal importance.

Line Spacing

Single-space text; double-space between paragraphs. If a letter is less than 10 lines, the text may be double-spaced. In that case, triple space between each paragraph. Double-spaced letters should have no more than two paragraphs. (See Illustration 3-2 for an example of a short letter.)

(Note: Letters to be signed by the Secretary are always single-spaced.)

Quotations

Run a quotation of less than two lines into the text. Longer quotations are set off by 1½ inches left and right margins.

Indicate omissions from quoted material by three asterisks or periods, with one space between each. When the omission is a full paragraph or more, indicate it by a full line of asterisks with five spaces between each.

Footnotes

Footnotes may not be used in letters. However, footnotes may be used in reports, attachments and enclosures.

Continuation Pages

Type the second and succeeding pages on plain bond paper. Beginning with the second page, type the page number, 1 inch from the top of the page, flush with the right margin. Double-space between the page number and the text.

Signature Block

The complimentary close “Sincerely,” is required on all letters. Type the complimentary close two lines below the last line of the text, in the middle of the page. Allow four lines between the complimentary close and the signer’s title. Begin typing the name and title of the official signing the letter on line five. A multi-page letter must include at least two lines of text on the signature page.

Enclosures

Material accompanying a letter is identified as an enclosure. If the enclosure is not specified in the text, provide a short description following the notation of the enclosure, or separate cover.

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Bulky Enclosures

Do not forward bulky enclosures which do not require a policy review. Instead, insert a sheet stating that the enclosures have been omitted and give a room and telephone number where they may be obtained. This also applies to documents that require policy review.

Separate Cover

Material that will be sent in an envelope separate from the letter is indicated by using "Separate Cover" rather than enclosure.

Information Copies (cc:)

If you want the addressee to know who is receiving copies of the correspondence, identify those receiving a copy (cc:) on the original.

Blind Copies

Identify blind copies (bcc:) only on the file copies.

Postscripts

Typed postscripts are inappropriate on an original letter. If the signer adds a handwritten postscript, that addition should be typed on all copies of the letter.

Saving Documents

All documents prepared for signature by senior officials must be saved in the "k:\share" drive so that any needed changes can be readily made.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Illustration 3-1

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Tribal Government Services

ES Control 01555

CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Honorable Calvin James
Chairman, New Tribe of Indians
2700 Baseline Road
Grand Island, New York 14072

Dear Chairman James:

This sample shows the general format used to respond to Controlled Correspondence. The organizational title is on the first line of the page if the top margin is set at 2 inches. Left and right margins are both 1 inch, except the “Tribal Government Services” line that has a left margin of .75 inches. Use the Special Handling information only when appropriate. When typing an inside address, please note that the name of the state is written in full. On the envelope, the state name is abbreviated.

Double-space between the inside address and the salutation and between the salutation and the text of the letter. All paragraphs are blocked with double spacing between paragraphs and between the text of the letter and the complimentary close. Begin typing the complimentary close at the center of the page two lines below the last line of the letter; four lines are provided for the signature, with the title typed on the fifth line. Enclosures are noted two lines below the signer’s title.

Sincerely,

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Separate Cover:
Correspondence Handbook

- GENERAL FORMAT FOR LETTERS.
- THE ES CONTROL NUMBER, “ADMINISTRATIVELY RESTRICTED” AND SPECIAL MAIL HANDLING NOTICES ARE INCLUDED ONLY WHEN APPROPRIATE.
- ADDRESS TRIBAL LEADERS AS “HONORABLE.”

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

Mr. Christopher D. Boesen
Executive Director, National
American Indian Housing Council
900 Second Street, N.E., Suite 305
Washington, D.C. 20002-3557

Dear Mr. Boesen:

Thank you for your invitation to attend the National American Indian Housing Council's Legal Symposium on December 6, 2XXX, to address the Bureau of Indian Affairs' proposed trust management rules.

Unfortunately, I have a previous commitment for that day. I would, however, appreciate receiving a copy of a report of the Symposium's proceedings. If you need additional information on the status of our regulatory review, please contact Reg Roule, Director, Trust Policies and Procedures Project at (202) 555-6400.

Sincerely,

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

- **SHORT LETTER, DOUBLE-SPACED WITH THREE LINE SPACES BETWEEN EACH PARAGRAPH.**

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Tribal Leader:

As you may know, the final trust regulations for leasing and grazing on Indian lands, probate and the management of trust funds that were proposed last year were published as final rules on January 22, 2001. The final regulations are available on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Trust Management Improvement web page at <http://www.doi.gov/bia/trust/tmip.htm>, or on the Federal Register web page at <http://www.nara.gov/fedreg>.

The BIA and the Department of the Interior (Department) have completed a substantial amount of the work identified in the first phase of regulatory reform outlined in the Trust Policies and Procedures project of the High Level Implementation Plan. We are preparing to enter the second phase of this important work. By the end of March 2001, we expect to submit a report to the Department's Trust Policy Council that identifies the work remaining to be done in the Department's reform of trust management, including updating trust program legislation, regulations, internal policy guidance, and operating procedures, along with recommendations for priorities and target dates. The focus of this effort will continue to be those programs that are directly or indirectly related to the management of trust assets, including land, natural resources, and trust funds. High among our priorities will be re-proposal of those portions of the trust funds management regulations at 25 CFR Part 115 that address Individual Indian Money Accounts. Additionally, the BIA will repropose new business and residential leasing regulations at 25 CFR Part 162 to address the Indian Land Consolidation Act Amendments of 2000 (Public Law 106-462).

By this letter and enclosure, we respectfully request your input as to the relative priorities that you and your tribe place on addressing the numerous areas of trust operations. This information will greatly assist us in identifying those activities to be completed in the second phase -- the activities that will have the most positive and significant impact on Indian country and the Department's management of its trust responsibilities. Those activities, which we do not select for completion in the second phase, will be addressed in future phases. We are also asking our field staff for their input so we can better determine where the lack of up-to-date policies and/or procedures is making their jobs most difficult. While we have made every effort to develop a comprehensive list of trust activities for this survey, space is provided for additions to the list.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

In order for us to compile the responses for inclusion in our report to the Trust Policies and Procedures Council, we would like to receive your reply by March 15, 2001. Responses may be telefaxed to (202) 208-6426, or mailed to the address below:

Trust Policies and Procedures Subproject MS 4070-MIB 1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240.

Thank you for your assistance in helping us to plan the next phase of this important aspect of trust reform.

Sincerely,

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

Enclosure

- **USE THE SPECIFIC OFFICE MAILSTOP RATHER THAN THE GENERAL BIA MAILING ADDRESS WHEN REQUESTING INFORMATION.**

Chapter 4—Memorandum Format

This chapter gives the format for preparing memoranda to be signed in Indian Affairs. Memoranda are used for all correspondence within and between bureaus and offices of the Department of the Interior. Samples of the format of different types of memoranda are shown in Illustrations 4-1 through 4-4 at the end of this chapter.

Letterhead

Prepare memoranda by using appropriate stationery as follows:

SIGNATURE	LETTERHEAD	SUCCEEDING PAGES
Assistant Secretary	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
Deputy Assistant Secretary	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
Office Directors reporting to one of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries	Office of the Secretary	Plain white bond
All BIA Officials	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Plain white bond

Format

The following standards give how to how to format text, characters, paragraphs, sentences, and entire documents.

Font

Use Arial 12 point, Times New Roman 12 point, Courier 12 point, or a similar font that is easy to read and presents a professional appearance.

Justification

Either full justification or left hand justification is acceptable. Use only left justification when preparing letters for the Secretary's signature.

Margins

- (1) **Top:** Allow at least 3 inches on the letterhead page between the top of the page and the inside address and 1 inch on following pages.
- (2) **Left, Right, and Bottom:** 1 inch. Left and right margins may be 1½ inches if the memorandum is very short.
- (3) When a memorandum is considerably less than one page in length, side margins wider than 1 inch may be used for a more balanced look.

Special Handling

If a memorandum will be subject to special mail handling, type the appropriate designation (SPECIAL DELIVERY; CERTIFIED MAIL – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED; etc.) flush with the left margin above the heading "Memorandum."

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Administrative Restrictions

If access to the correspondence is to be limited, stamp or type the appropriate marking (FOR GOVERNMENT USE ONLY or ADMINISTRATIVELY RESTRICTED) above the letterhead and at the bottom of each page of the original and all copies.

Date

Omit the date and use a date stamp after the memorandum is signed.

“Memorandum” Line

The title “Memorandum” is typed flush with the left margin and no less than four lines down from the letterhead.

“To” Line

The “To:” line is typed flush with the left margin and two lines below the title “Memorandum.” The complete title of the addressee is used whenever possible. Multiple addressees are listed vertically with each title beginning on a new line. When addressing a memorandum to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary, type their titles as “Secretary” and “Deputy Secretary.”

“Attention” Line

When applicable, the “Attention:” line is considered part of the “To:” line and is typed immediately below the title of the addressee.

“Through” Line

When higher level review is required before delivery to the recipient, the “Through:” line is typed flush with the left margin and two lines below the “To:” line. The complete title of the reviewing official is used whenever possible.

“From” Line

The “From:” line is typed flush with the left margin and two lines below the “To:” or “Through:” line. The complete title of the signing official is used whenever possible. Otherwise, type that portion of the title which may be added to by stamp (e.g., Deputy, Acting).

“Subject” Line

The “Subject:” line is typed flush with the left margin and two lines below the “From:” line. The subject line on all memoranda will clearly identify the subject and purpose to ensure appropriate handling by the addressees and intermediate officials. If a memorandum relates to a controlled correspondence, type the control number on the “Subject:” line of the memorandum.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Body of Memorandum

The body of the memorandum begins two lines below the “Subject:” line. Memoranda are to be brief and to the point; try to limit it to one page. If it is necessary to expound on a subject for the sake of clarity, the substance of the communication should be prepared as an attachment and the memorandum written to transmit the attachment.

Addressing Memos To Multiple Recipients Within Indian Affairs

To:	Recipients
All Employees	All employees in the Office of the Assistant Secretary, the Office of Indian Education Programs, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in headquarters, the regions, and the field
All Headquarters Organizations	All headquarters branches, divisions, and offices within the Office of the Assistant Secretary, the Office of Indian Education Programs, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs
Headquarters Directors	All headquarters directors in the Office of the Assistant Secretary, the BIA and OIEP
Central Office Deputy Directors	All headquarters deputy directors who report to the Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Central Office Division Chiefs	Used only in conjunction with Central Office Deputy Directors, distribution is expanded to include mid-level managers in headquarters
Education Line Officers	All area and agency education program administrators
Regional Deputy Directors	All Regional Deputy Directors
Agency Superintendents and Field Officers	Used only in conjunction with Regional Deputy Directors, distribution is expanded to include all officers-in-charge of BIA field locations

Sentence

Never split a sentence between two pages. A sentence should average 15 – 20 words, and never longer than 40 words. Cut out words that aren't really necessary.

Paragraph

Use block format. Start a new paragraph near the end of a page only if at least two lines will fit on the first page and at least two lines will continue on to the following page. In all other cases, begin the new paragraph on the following page.

Paragraph Numbering

Paragraphs and subparagraphs may be numbered and lettered for clarity, if necessary. Most word processing software provides a number of options for numbering and lettering paragraphs and subparagraphs: use the style best suited to the correspondence.

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Bullets

Bullets may be used in memoranda to be signed in Indian Affairs as an option to numbering and lettering paragraphs. Bullets are less formal than numbering and lettering but are appropriate when each of the “bulleted” items is of equal importance.

Line Spacing

Single-space text; double-space between paragraphs. If a memorandum is less than 10 lines, the text may be double-spaced. In that case, triple space between each paragraph. Double-spaced memoranda should have no more than two paragraphs.

Quotations

Run a quotation of less than two lines into the text. Longer quotations are set off by 1½ inch left and right margins.

Footnotes

Footnotes may be used in memoranda.

Continuation Pages

Type the second and succeeding pages on plain bond paper. Beginning with the second page, type the page number 1 inch from the top of the page, flush with the right margin. Double-space between the page number and the text.

Signature Block

Do not type anything in the signature area of a memorandum, since a complimentary close is not used and the signer’s title is already given in the heading.

Disposition Blocks

Disposition blocks are used to show concurrence or approval by higher organizational levels. Type disposition blocks flush with the left margin, on the fourth line below any preceding entry. A sample of the format of disposition blocks is shown in Illustration 4-4 at the end of this chapter. Prepare disposition blocks for letters using the same format.

Attachments

Material accompanying a memorandum is identified as an attachment. If the attachment is not specified in the text, provide a short description following the notation of the attachment, or separate cover.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Bulky Attachments

Do not forward bulky attachments which do not require a policy review. Instead, insert a sheet stating that the attachments have been omitted and give a room and telephone number where they may be obtained. This also applies to documents that require policy review.

Separate Cover

Material that will be sent in an envelope separate from the memorandum is indicated by using "Separate Cover" rather than attachment.

Information Copies (cc:)

If you want the addressee to know who is receiving copies of the memorandum, identify those receiving a copy (cc:) on the original.

Blind Copies

Identify blind copies (bcc:) only on the file copies.

Saving Documents

All documents prepared for signature by senior officials must be saved in the "k:\share" drive so that any needed changes can be readily made.

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Special Trustee for American Indians
Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Through: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

From: Deputy Director, Office of Trust Services

Subject: Analysis of Trust Resource Functions

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has completed the functional analysis of trust resources required by the High Level Implementation Plan, Trust Policies and Procedures subproject, Milestone E8. The BIA reviewed approximately 75 subject areas that are either covered by existing regulations or that could benefit from formal regulatory guidance. In addition, the BIA sent a survey to all Indian tribes and all regions requesting assistance in establishing the priorities for updating regulations, policy manuals, and operational handbooks.

The attached report provides a summary of existing regulations, identifies inconsistencies with the Trust Principles set forth in Secretarial Order No. 3215 and 303 DM 2, indicates whether the regulations should be amended or repealed, and recommends a multi-year schedule for completing the task. While the report is comprehensive in terms of subject matter that needs to be reviewed, it is highly likely that the scope of the deficiencies to be corrected will expand as we work jointly with tribal governments, the Office of the Special Trustee, and field staff to make the necessary revisions.

We are available to answer questions that you may have concerning the report and the recommendations contained therein.

Attachment

- GENERAL FORMAT FOR A MEMORANDUM.
- USE THE "THROUGH" LINE WHEN IT IS NECESSARY TO INDICATE REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY AN OFFICIAL SENIOR TO THE "FROM" EMPLOYEE/OFFICER.

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Director, Office of Self-Governance
All Central Office Deputy Directors and Directors
All Deputy Regional Directors

From: Comptroller and Chief Financial Officer

Subject: FY 2001 Management Control Process

It is time to begin the FY 2001 Management Control Process. The Deputy Director, Office of Financial Management, provides guidance at Attachment 1 on the timing and conduct of the Department's FY 2001 Management Control Program.

You are requested to complete Attachment 2, Indian Affairs: 2001 Management Control Plan. The completed forms should be sent to the Office of Audit and Evaluation by January 15, 2XXX. Your responses will be consolidated into a Bureau-wide plan and submitted to the Department. In preparing your submission, please keep in mind the following:

- Use scheduled program reviews to meet management control requirements.
- Avoid reviews that duplicate General Accounting Office and Office of Inspector General audit work.
- Conduct reviews of those functions or programs that are of particular concern to you as a manager.

During FY 2001, the General Accounting Officer and the Office of Inspector General have scheduled the reviews that are listed on the following page.

General Accounting Office

- Reduction of Accumulated Fuels on Federal Lands
- Tribal Acknowledgment Process
- Comparison of DOD and BIA Schools

Indian Affairs Correspondence
Handbook (7 IAM-H)

Office of Inspector General

- Bonding of Oil and Gas Wells
- Selected Programs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes
- Compliance with Local Financial Plans

If you need assistance in planning or conducting management control reviews or have questions, please contact the Office of Audit and Evaluation, Mr. John Monroe, (202) 555-1212.

Attachments

- “CENTRAL OFFICE” DEPUTY DIRECTORS INCLUDE ONLY THE OFFICERS IN BIA; THOSE IN THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY’S OFFICE SHOULD BE SEPARATELY IDENTIFIED IN THE LIST OF ADDRESSEES.
- BULLETS ARE APPROPRIATE IN THIS MEMORANDUM, AS EACH OF THE ITEMS IN THE SEPARATE LISTS IS OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE AS THE OTHER ITEMS.

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget
Attention: Ms. Penny Pincher

From: Deputy Director, Office of Trust Services

Subject: CFO Advisory Task Force

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has designated Greene Eyeshade, Administrative Officer, Olympic Peninsula Agency, to serve as the Indian Affairs member of the CFO Advisory Task Force. You may contact Mr. Eyeshade at (206) 555-1212.

cc: Director, Office of Human Resources
Chief, Division of Accounting Operations
Chief, Division of Acquisition

- MEMOS TO AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY WOULD NORMALLY BE SIGNED EITHER BY THE DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS OR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY; HOWEVER, ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS DIRECTED TO A STAFF MEMBER IN THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S OFFICE MAY BE SIGNED AT LOWER ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS.

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Illustration 4-4

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

From: Director, Office of Financial Management

Subject: Membership on CFO Advisory Task Force

By a memorandum dated September 30, 2001, the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget requested that each Assistant Secretary appoint a representative to serve on a Task Force to formulate recommendations for enhancements to and integration of a number of Department-wide administrative systems.

I recommend that Greene Eyeshade, Administrative Officer, Olympic Peninsula Agency, serve as the Indian Affairs' member of the Task Force. The Director, Northwest Region, endorses this appointment.

Concur:

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Date

Approved:

Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

Date

cc: Deputy Director, Northwest Region

- "CONCUR" IS TYPED FOUR LINES AFTER ANY PRECEDING TEXT.
- NOTE THE CORRECT FORM TO ADDRESS ONE REGIONAL DIRECTOR.

Chapter 5 — Copies

Revised: June 2004

Replaces: Bureau of Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook published in June 1996 and the Indian Affairs Correspondence Handbook dated October 2001

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This chapter provides information on copy requirements and specifications. Use the following requirements when preparing letters and memoranda.

A. FILE COPIES THAT MUST ACCOMPANY CORRESPONDENCE

Blind Copy (bcc)

The distribution of blind copies is identified only on file copies. In addition to listing the various file copies, it is also used to identify internal distribution of informational copies.

Information Copy (cc:)

Notations of cc: identify recipients for the benefit of the addressee. Information copies (cc:) for other recipients are photocopies of the signed original letter or memorandum.

Chronological Copy

“Chronological copies” are maintained in date order by the originating office. Maintenance of these files is at the option of each originating office.

Copy to your Washington Office (For Controlled Congressional Correspondence ONLY)

When responding to a Member of Congress at a district office, the notation “Copy to Your Washington Office” is included on the original and a letterhead copy of the response is sent to the Member’s Washington Office. It is not included on the courtesy copy.

Courtesy Copy

A courtesy copy is produced on letterhead copy paper and is sent with all replies to letters from Members of Congress. Print continuation pages on plain white paper. This copy is provided as a service to congressional inquiry so that our response can readily be forwarded to the constituent.

File Copy

A generic term covering surname copies, hold copies, chronological copies, reading copies, and other copies maintained for reference.

Hold Copy

A copy that is kept in the originating office as a reminder until the correspondence is signed. This copy is not forwarded with the package for surname/signature but held in originating office. Maintenance of these files is at the option of each originating office.

Indian Affairs - Executive Secretariat (IA-ES)

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Printed on letterhead copy. This copy must accompany all controlled correspondence and all non-controlled correspondence that will be signed by the Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, a Deputy Assistant Secretary, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, or the Assistant Secretary.

Informational Copy

A photocopy of the signed original letter that is provided to other Indian Affairs or Departmental offices that have an official interest in the subject of the correspondence.

Surname Copy – Secretary’s File Copy

Printed on yellow Office of the Secretary letterhead with the surname “ladder.” Print continuation pages on plain yellow paper. These copies must accompany all correspondence to be signed by a Deputy Assistant Secretary, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary or by the Assistant Secretary. A BIA surname copy printed on plain yellow paper is included with these copies.

(Note: Proper surnaming requires that surnames be fully spelled out and dated. Initials on surname copies will not be accepted.)

Secretary’s Reading File (RF)

Printed on white letterhead copy paper. These copies are sent to the Department for senior Departmental staff review and information. Print continuation pages on plain white paper. Two RF copies must be made for all Indian Affairs correspondence signed by the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, or by a Deputy Assistant Secretary.

Surname Copy – Bureau of Indian Affairs

Printed on yellow BIA letterhead. Continuation pages are printed on plain yellow paper. This is the official BIA file copy that must accompany all correspondence to be signed by a BIA official.

B. NOTATIONS ON FILE COPIES

Multiple Addressees

When the same reply is sent to more than one person, make just one file set. Two lines below the signature block on the file set, type: “Similar letter sent to:” and type a vertical list of the names and addresses of the other recipients. See the following example:

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Similar letter sent to:

Mr. John Smith
National Congress of American Indians
1300 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Ms. Jane Adams
1451 West 156th Street
Chicago, IL 60036

Distribution of File Copies

Type "bcc:" (in lower case) and list the distribution of copies in a vertical column or columns, or type across the page using semicolons to separate the copies. Multiple informational copies can be listed on the same line. It is not necessary to provide a copy to every organization that surnames a letter unless there is specific direction to do so.

Department File Copies for Secretary's Office

The following example identifies the copies for correspondence tasked to Indian Affairs by the Department Executive Secretariat. Use the notations "ES-SIO (TP#____)" for identification purposes of department controlled correspondence.

bcc: Secretary's Surname; Secretary's Reading File (2); *CL; *PMB; *SOL; ES-SIO (TP# Enter the Tasking Profile # for DOI Controlled Correspondence); BIA Surname; Chron; IA-ES (Control #);

*Only when recommended surnames are required.

File Copies for BIA Officials

The following example identifies the copies required for all controlled correspondence that will be signed in the BIA and for all letters or memoranda prepared for the DBIA signature. If informational copies are provided to other offices, those offices should be noted as shown in the preceding example. Omit the copy for IA-ES for non-controlled correspondence that is signed by a Deputy Director or Director.

bcc: OTS Surname; IA-ES (Control # if applicable); Chron; Hold (optional)

Organization, Author, Typist, Date, Telephone No., Document ID, and Records Schedule Number

The following table shows how to identify those involved in production of the document, where it can be found on the computer system, and the records schedule in which the official

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surname copy and related material will be filed. The "IA" identifier is used only if the document will be signed by an official outside of Indian Affairs.

<u>IA:OTS:RFJones:abc:06/28/04:208-7818:k\shared\letters\ES Control 1234:3601-T5</u>						
*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Records Schedule No.
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Computer drive, file folder, and document ID
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Author's Telephone Number
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Date typed
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Typist's initials
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Author's initials and last name
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* Originating Office
*	*	*	*	*	*	
*	*	*	*	*	*	* IA (Use only when correspondence will be signed outside of Indian Affairs)

Reruns

Corrections for spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., are indicated on the file copy by including a second line under the line displayed above. Changes of this type do not need to be cleared through any office that has previously surnamed the document. Draw an "X" through the original correspondence and surname copy; fold in half lengthwise, and clip them to the left inside of the folder on top of any other material. Type the original surnames and dates surnamed on the official file copy and forward to the office that returned the document for correction.

OTS:RFJones:abc:06/28/04:208-7818:k\share\letters\ES Control 1234:3601-T5 Rerun:abc:06/30/04

Rewrites

Indicate corrections that change the meaning of the correspondence as shown below. Draw an "X" through the original correspondence and surname copy; fold in half lengthwise, and clip them to the left inside of the folder on top of any other material. Rewritten correspondence must be rerouted through other surname offices. All surnames must be shown on revised copies.

OTS:RFJones:abc:06/28/04:208-7818:k\share\letters\ES Control 1234:3601-T5 Rerun:abc:06/30/04 Rewritten:SOL:Keep:abc:07/15/04 Rewritten:Blackwell:abc:07/18/04
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C. INFORMATIONAL COPIES

Make photocopies of signed originals to distribute as informational copies and one to keep with the official file copy. The following table shows those who should routinely receive copies of different types of correspondence:

Responding Organization	When the correspondence . . .	Provide copy to . . .
All Action Offices	Is to Members of Congress	Congressional and Legislative Affairs
All Action Offices	Responds to a FOIA or Privacy Act Request	FOIA Officer or FOIA Coordinator
All Action Offices	Commits another organization to take action; or Directs the correspondent to another organization	Organization(s) referenced in the correspondence
Central Office	Is to an Indian tribe	Regional Deputy Director and Agency Superintendent or Field Officer
Central Office	Is to a school board	Education Line Officer and Principal (if the school is Bureau-operated)
Region	Is to an Indian tribe	Superintendent or Field Officer

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Chapter 6 — Signature Package

This chapter describes how to arrange and assemble correspondence when it is ready for review and signature.

A. Briefing Papers

Staff members should prepare an explanatory note as a cover for large or complicated packages so that the reviewing and signing officials need not read the entire package. Briefing papers should also be used if the correspondence may have major impact on/or effect a policy change, or if it is relevant to an upcoming meeting.

B. Enclosures or Attachments

Bulky enclosures or attachments that do not require a policy review need not be forwarded with the correspondence. If it is necessary that bulky enclosures accompany the correspondence, hold the copies of the enclosures/attachments with informational copies until the correspondence is signed.

C. Route Sheets

Use the appropriate Route Sheet to direct correspondence that will be signed outside of the originating office:

(1) Automated Indian Affairs Route Sheet (Central Office only) for all other correspondence to be signed outside of the originating action office (This form is used to show routing for non-controlled correspondence which is created by the action office.); and

(2) Controlled Correspondence/FOIA Route Sheets (These forms are attached by IA-ES and FOIA office to priority correspondence assigned for control.).

(Note: Full instructions for completing the Controlled Correspondence form are on the reverse side of the form.)

D. Surname and Signature Identification

(1) If there is more than one letter or memorandum to be surnamed, attach surname tabs to the upper right corner of each of the pages to be surnamed.

(2) If a letter or memorandum is more than one page, attach a signature tab to the lower right corner of the page to be signed.

(3) If there is more than one letter or memorandum to be signed, attach a signature tab to the lower right corner of each of the pages to be signed.

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E. Folder Assembly

Use folder for all correspondence that will be signed outside of the originating office. Arrange the correspondence as shown in the following table:

LEFT INSIDE OF FOLDER	RIGHT INSIDE OF FOLDER
1. Explanatory information, if necessary	1. Plastic cover
2. Incoming letter or memo, if any	2. Outgoing letter or memorandum
3. Interim reply or acknowledgement	3. Courtesy copy, if required
4. Background material if any	4. Enclosures or attachments, if any
5. Copy of enclosure or attachment	5. Addressed white envelope, if required
	6. *Brown envelope (flap folded over items 2-5)
	7. Secy's Surname, Secy's RF (2), if required
	8. BIA surname copy
	9. IA-ES copy, behind routing sheet
	10. Office of chronological copy
	11. Office hold copy (optional)

*The brown envelope separates all outgoing papers from file copies and serves as a guide to the surname copy.

(Note: Place IA-ES and copy for Office of External Affairs, Congressional and Legislative Affairs—IA (congressional mail) under the routing sheet.)

Chapter 7—Correspondence Handling After Signature

CORRESPONDENCE SIGNED IN INDIAN AFFAIRS

A. Indian Affairs Signing Office.

After a letter or memorandum is signed, the signing office will—

- (1) Stamp the date on the signed original letter or memorandum and return entire folder to IA-ES;
- (2) IA-ES will stamp the name and date of the signing official on all copies;
- (3) IA-ES will remove and distribute the Secretary's surname copy, the Secretary's Reading File copies, any copies designated for the Department ES-SIO, and IA-ES copy*; and
- (4) IA-ES will place the completed package in the appropriate location for pick-up by the originating office.

**(Note: This statement does not apply to Federal Register documents and Tribal-State compacts. IA-ES will return the original route sheets and surname copies to the originating office.)*

B. Originating Office.

The originating office will pick up signed correspondence and—

- (1) Make copies of the signed original if necessary;
- (2) Mail the signed correspondence and informational copies using an addressed envelope;
- (3) If the correspondence is an interim reply, return folder and contents to the responsible staff member for preparing the final reply;
- (4) Attach the surname copy to the original incoming letter, and file appropriately; and
- (5) File the office chronological copy and dispose of the office hold copy.

Chapter 8 — Clearance and Signature Authorities

This chapter discusses the correspondence clearance process and identifies the Indian Affairs senior officials who are authorized to sign controlled correspondence.

A. Surname Process

In DOI and BIA, the "surname process" is used to record official concurrence with the content of a variety of written documents, such as testimony, written responses to congressional hearings, comments on proposed legislation, correspondence, and reports. The surname process is designed to ensure that written information is accurate and provides consistent policy statements. To expedite the process, surnames should be kept to a minimum of two in each office.

B. Nonconcurrence

Senior officials or employees are not required to surname a document that the official believes to be incorrect or inappropriate. If an official does not concur with a document received for surname, he/she should take one of the following actions:

- (1) If the desired change is minor and does not involve substantive changes to the content of the correspondence, rewrite the document.
- (2) If the desired change affects the substance of the correspondence, contact the originator and attempt to reach an agreement on content.
- (3) If the desired change affects the substance of the correspondence and agreement cannot be reached with the originator, prepare an "internal" memorandum for inclusion on the left side of the correspondence file. This memorandum should contain the writer's objections, the reasons for them and suggested new wording (if appropriate).
- (4) If an official lacks knowledge or jurisdictional interest in the subject, neither concurs nor objects to the document, he/she may indicate this by writing "noted" to the left of his/her surname.

C. Correspondence Clearance

Correspondence should be routed through offices with a direct interest in or responsibility for the functions, programs, or policies that are covered by the correspondence. While the identification of appropriate clearances is often a case-by-case determination, some general clearance requirements are shown below:

- (1) BIA Deputy Directors or AS-IA Office Directors must surname all correspondence originating in their organization and forwarded for signature by the DBIA or any official in the Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs.

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(2) Subject Matter Experts must review correspondence that addresses the following specific matters:

Subject	Clear Through	
	Headquarters	Field
Accounting policies and practices	Office of the Chief Financial Officer	Accounting Officer or Administrative Officer
FOIA and Privacy Act	Office of the Chief Information Officer	FOIA Coordinator
Fund distribution, appropriations actions, fund status	Office of the Chief Financial Officer	Budget Officer or Administrative Officer
GAO and OIG audits	Audit and Evaluation, Chief Financial Officer	Audit and Evaluation
Interagency Agreements	Division of Acquisition (BIA) or Division of Acquisition and Property Management (DOI) as appropriate	Contracting Officer
Interpretation of laws or regulations, appeals, or other legal matters	Solicitor	Regional Solicitor
Legislative proposals	Office of External Affairs	Office of External Affairs
Organizational change	Servicing Personnel Office, Budget Management, and Human Resources	Servicing Personnel Office, Budget Management, and Human Resources
Performance under grants, contracts, cooperative agreements or proposed amendments to such awards	Commercial: COTR, COR, and Contracting Officer; Grants and Self-Determination Awards: Awarding Official	Commercial: COTR, COR, and Contracting Officer; Grants and Self-Determination Awards: Awarding Official
Personnel actions	Servicing Personnel Office	Servicing Personnel Office
Proposed and final regulations	Office of Planning and Policy Analysis	N/A
Responses to media	Office of External Affairs	Office of External Affairs
Transfer or disposal of personal or real property	Division of Property Management	Property Officer
Unfair labor practices or other official correspondence with union representatives	Servicing Personnel Office, Office of Human Resources	Servicing Personnel Office

D. Clearance of Revised Correspondence

If substantive changes are made during the clearance process, the document is re-routed for clearance. Documents that have only minor changes relating to style, grammar, and punctuation, may be sent directly to the office that recommended the changes. In this case, the surnames and dates of the offices that had previously cleared the document are entered on the file copy.

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E. Signature Authority

The FULL NAME of the person signing a document is typed above the person's title.

(1) Memoranda — The full name of the person signing the memoranda is typed on the "From" line, above the person's title. *Example:*

(Full name of incumbent)
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

(2) Letters — The full name of the person signing the letter is typed in the complimentary closing, under the person's signature and above the person's title. *Example:*

(Full name of incumbent)
Director, Office of Indian Education Programs

(3) Approval documents — Type the full name of the person approving the document on the approval line, below the person's signature. *Example:*

(Full name of incumbent)
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

The *lowest* organizational level at which various types of correspondence can be signed is shown below. Any official acting for a designated signer may sign, as may those at a higher organizational level.

Addressee(s)	Headquarters	Field
All Tribal Leaders	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs	N/A
All Tribal leaders within a single region	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs	Regional Deputy Director
All Tribal leaders within a single agency	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs	Superintendent
Individual Tribal Leaders	Bureau Deputy Director; AS-IA Office Director	Superintendent
All School Boards	Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	N/A
All School Boards under an Education Line Officer	Deputy Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	Education Line Officer
Heads of National Indian Organizations	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs; Director, Office of Law Enforcement Services	Regional Deputy Director
Chairman/Ranking Minority Member, Interior Appropriations Subcommittees	Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget	N/A
Chairman/Vice Chairman, Indian Affairs Committee	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	N/A
Chairman/Ranking Minority Member, House Resources	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian	N/A

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Committee	Education Programs	
Members of Congress: constituent inquiries other than tribal	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; BIA Deputy Director; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	Regional Deputy Director and Education Line Officer
Members of Congress: tribal matters and policy concerns	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs; Director, Office of Law Enforcement Services	Regional Deputy Director
Governors	Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	Regional Deputy Director
General Public: Release of Information requested under FOIA/Privacy Act	Office of the Chief Information Officer	Regional Deputy Director; Superintendent; Education Line Officer
General Public: Denial/Partial Denial/No record responses to FOIA/Privacy Act requests	Office of Chief Information Officer	Regional Deputy Director
General Public: General Information	BIA Deputy Director; AS-IA Office Director	Regional Deputy Director; Superintendent; Education Line Officer
Secretaries/Deputy Secretaries	Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs	N/A
Assistant Secretaries	Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	N/A
Other DOI Bureau Directors	Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	N/A
Other DOI Bureaus' and other Departments' State/Regional Directors	Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Indian Education Programs	Regional Deputy Director
BIA Regional and Headquarters Directors	Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Director, Office of Education Programs	Regional Deputy Director

F. Authorization for Auto Pen Signatures

Auto pen signatures are authorized by the AS–IA and designated staff delegated to authorize the use of the auto pen signature.

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Chapter 9 — Guidelines for Letter Writers

The guidelines presented in this chapter will help you comply with the President's June 1, 1998, memorandum on plain language in government writing.

On June 1, 1998, President Clinton signed "Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Plain Language in Government Writing" and published in the Federal Register on June 10, 1998 (63 FR 31885).

In the Memorandum, the President directs the Federal Government to send a clear message about what it is doing, what it requires, and what services it offers. Plain language must be used in all new documents, other than regulations, that explain how to obtain a benefit or service or how to comply with a requirement you administer or enforce. For example, these documents may include letters, forms, notices, and instructions.

Section 1. What's Plain Language?

Plain language can be understood by YOUR reader at first reading. It doesn't mean writing for certain grade level—it means organizing and writing for your reader. Writing in plain language saves time and money for writers and readers.

The Plain Language Website at www.plainlanguage.gov offers more detailed guidance, good examples, related reference documents, links to other plain language sites, and a list of people willing to give you advice and assistance. In general:

- Organize your material to serve the needs of your reader.
- Write sentences in the active voice and use "you" and other pronouns.
- Use common, everyday words in short sentences.
- Use easy-to-read design features like lists, tables, graphics, and "white space."
- Write short sentences and sections.

The Plain Language Action Network provides the following advice on writing letters:

The traditional way of writing government documents has not worked well. Too often, complicated and jargon-filled documents have resulted in frustration, lawsuits, and a lack of trust between citizens and their government. To overcome this legacy, we have a great responsibility to communicate clearly.

Section 2. How Can We Be Better Writers?

We believe that the most important goals are these—

- Engage your reader
- Write clearly
- Write in a visually appealing style

The next several pages summarize some of the best techniques to achieve these three goals. Following the summary, you'll find detailed suggestions for applying these techniques to your writing.

Engage Your Readers

Engaging your readers sends a message that you have considered who they are and what they need to know. When you communicate a concern for your readers' needs, they are more likely to be receptive to your message.

When your document is plainly written, your readers are more likely to—

- Understand what you want and take appropriate action
- Focus on key information
- Believe that you are concerned with their needs

How can you engage your readers?

You engage readers by speaking to them directly and clearly and by organizing your message in a structure that reflects their interests. Here are some key ways—

A. Identify your audience

Identify your audience early and think about why the reader needs to read the document. Identify people who will be interested, even if they are not directly affected. Write to everyone who is interested, not just to technical or legal experts. Keep in mind the average reader's level of technical expertise.

B. Organize to meet your reader's needs

People read documents to get answers. They want to know how to do something or what happens if they don't do something. Organize your document to respond to these concerns. Frequently this means describing events as they occur--you fill out an application to get a benefit, you submit the application, the agency reviews the application, the agency makes a decision on the application. Think through the questions your readers are likely to ask and then organize them in that order.

C. Use "you" and other pronouns to speak directly to readers

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“You” reinforces the message that the document is intended for your reader in a way that “he,” “she,” or “they” cannot. More than any other single technique, using “you” pulls readers into your document and makes it relevant to them. Using “we” to refer to your agency makes your sentences shorter and your document more accessible readers.

D. Use the active voice

Active voice makes it clear who is supposed to do what. It eliminates ambiguity about responsibilities. *Not:* “It must be done.” *But,* “You [or someone else] must do it.”

E. Use the appropriate tone

The tone of a letter affects how well the reader takes in your message. A cold tone can cause the reader to tune out the message. In some cases, it causes him to put down the letter rather than attempting to read it at all. Select the tone based on who your reader is and what his or her circumstances are.

Write Clearly

For years, most of us have addressed our documents mainly to technical experts and lawyers, rather than to the many other readers we want to influence. A jargon-laden, legalistic style does not clearly convey important information. You can reduce confusion or misinterpretation for all readers without sacrificing the technical integrity of your writing.

How can you write more clearly?

Government documents present special challenges because of the highly technical information they often contain. At the same time, you have multiple audiences, some highly knowledgeable, some less so. In fact, focus-group results show that even technical experts do not always understand technical language easily or quickly. The following techniques will help ensure that you keep your language clear, so that your users can focus on technical information.

Use short sentences

Express only one idea in each sentence. Long, complicated sentences often mean that you aren’t clear about what you want to say. Shorter sentences show clear thinking. Shorter sentences are also better for conveying complex information; they break the information up into smaller, easier-to-process units. Vary your sentence structure to avoid chopiness, but don’t revert to tangled multi-clause sentences.

Use the simplest tense you can

Using present tense avoids the clutter of compound verbs and clearly conveys what is standard practice.

Use “must” to convey requirements

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Use “must” for obligation, “may” for permission, and “should” for preference. Use “may not” to convey prohibitions. Avoid the ambiguous “shall.” When was the last time you heard “shall” in everyday conversation? If you must include advisory material, put it in brackets.

Place words carefully

There are several ways you can reduce ambiguity—

- Keep subjects and objects close to their verbs.
- Put conditionals such as “only” or “always” and other modifiers next to the words they modify. Write “you are required to provide only the following,” not “you are only required to provide the following.”
- Put long conditions after the main clause. Write “complete form 9-123 if you own more than 50 acres and cultivate grapes,” not “if you own more than 50 acres and cultivate grapes, complete form 9-123.”

Avoid words and constructions that cause confusion

Common sources of confusion include—

- Undefined or overused abbreviations and acronyms
- Two different terms used for the same thing (car, vehicle, auto, conveyance--choose one)
- Giving an obscure technical or legal meaning to a word commonly understood to mean something different (defining “car” to include trucks)
- Legal, technical, and “fashionable,” but confusing, jargon
- Strings of nouns forming complex constructions (surface water quality protection procedures)
- Pronouns that don't clearly refer to specific nouns
- Stilted, wordy language

Use contractions when appropriate

Contractions can speed reading, improve accuracy, and sometimes soften the tone of your letters.

Write in a visually appealing style

We want our documents to help readers get information. Visually appealing documents are far easier to understand than more traditional styles. Traditional government documents are often dense and confusing. Replace blocks of text with headings, tables, and more white space. You will help your reader by making the main points readily apparent and grouping related items together. Use a clear and un-crowded presentation and your readers will be

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more likely to understand what you want to convey. In turn, your readers will be more likely to do what you want them to do in their dealings with your agency.

Include only one issue in each designated paragraph

Limiting each paragraph to one issue gives the document a clean appearance and contributes to the impression that it is easy to read and understand. By presenting only one issue in each designated paragraph, you can use informative headings that reflect the entire issue covered by the paragraph when writing particularly long or complex letters.

Use vertical lists

Vertical lists highlight a series of requirements or other information in a visually clear way. Use vertical lists to help your reader focus on important material. Vertical lists—

- Highlight levels of importance
- Help the reader understand the order in which things happen
- Make it easy for the reader to identify all necessary steps in a process
- Add blank space for easy reading

Use tested emphasis techniques to highlight important points

Emphasis techniques are useful to draw the reader's attention to a line or two. You should use techniques like ***bold and italics*** that have been tested on readers; they draw the reader's attention to the area and are easy to read. You shouldn't use **ALL CAPS**; they're much harder to read.

Section 3. More Techniques for Better Writing

This section provides examples of how to use the techniques listed in the introduction. The examples are drawn from different agencies across the Federal Government. Because this guidance was written initially for regulations writers, most of the examples are from regulations. You won't find any of these exact examples in the *Code of Federal Regulations*. We've altered them to provide what we think are better examples of the techniques we recommend.

In the rest of this chapter, we've used the symbols below to help indicate visually the points we're making.

We've used ...	to indicate ...
✓	Particularly important concepts
☹	bad examples of plain English
☺	our suggestions for a better presentation of the same subject matter
<i>Italics</i>	examples of text

Identify Your Audience

✓ **Identify who is affected by a document and write to get their attention and answer their questions.**

You have to grab your readers' attention if you want to get your ideas across. Let's face it, readers just want to know what applies to them. The best way to grab and hold their attention is to figure out who they are and what they want to know. Put yourself in their shoes. It will give you a new perspective.

Tell your readers why the material is important to them. Say, "If you want a research grant, here's what you have to do." Or, "If you want to mine Federal coal, here's what you should know." Or, "If you are planning a trip to Rwanda, read this first."

Identifying your audience should do more than just cause you to make sure the terms you use are clear. It should help you focus on the reader's needs. You should do this by thinking about what your reader knows about the situation now. Then think about how to guide them from their current knowledge base to what you need them to know. To help you do this, try answering the following questions—

- Who is the reader?
- Is there a secondary reader we need to give information?
- What does the reader(s) already know about the subject?
- What questions will the reader(s) have?

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- What's the best outcome for my agency? What do I need to say to get this outcome?
- What's the best outcome for the reader? What do I need to say to get this outcome?

✓ **Write to address your readers and their interests.**

In a letter it is pretty easy to identify who your audience is; it is usually the person you are writing to. However, you must also consider any additional readers. For instance, if you write to a Member of Congress about a constituent problem, the office of the Member of Congress may attach a cover letter and send it on to the constituent without any further explanation. Therefore, you must write so that both audiences understand your letter.

Organize to meet your readers' needs

Once you've decided who your readers are and what they need to know, the next step is to present the information in an order that will make it easy to understand. Although letters will differ depending on the audience or the subject, your letter should usually have the same basic elements:

Opening Paragraph(s)

Include the following in the opening paragraph—

- The **main message** up front where the reader can find it.
- A **sympathetic opening**, if the situation calls for it.
- An **overview sentence** explaining what the letter is about.

Following Paragraphs

Present information in a logical order—

- In the order the reader would ask about it.
- In chronological order.

Main Message

Always start by putting your main message up front. Some people feel that bad news should be buried. But research shows that readers will always look for the bottom line. When you bury the main message, you only make it harder on your readers.

Sympathetic Tone

Research shows that the tone of a letter does affect how readable it is. A cold mechanical letter can cause readers to turn off before they read your message. That does not mean that

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we write to a customer the same way we would write to a relative. But it does mean you should use compassion and common sense.

Overview Sentence

While the Main Message is about the subject of the letter, the Overview Sentence is about the content. It's one sentence that acts as a kind of table of contents.

If the main message is **“Your benefits have been denied. . .”** The overview sentence might be, “This letter will explain why we denied your benefits, what you can do if you think we’re wrong, and how long you have to reapply.”

✓ **You should present the information in the letter in the same order as you show it in the Overview Sentence.**

How does the Overview Sentence compliment the Headings?

Think of your letter as guidance to get from Point A to Point B.

- The overview sentence is like the directions that tells the reader what to look for en route.
- The headings are the road signs that tell the reader when they’ve gotten there.

Letter Headings

Question headings are especially helpful in your letters. Headings in a letter help guide your readers to the points that are relevant to them.

There are three types of headings:

	Definition	Example
Question Heading	A heading in the form of a question.	Why Do We Use Headings?
Statement Heading	A heading that uses a noun and a verb.	Headings Help Guide a Reader.
Topic Heading	A heading that is a word or short phrase.	Helpful Headings.

Readers read through letters by asking questions. That’s why—

- Question Headings are the most useful. They ask the questions that readers are asking and guide them to the answers.
- Statement Headings are the next best choice because they are still very specific.
- Topic Headings are the most formal so many times management is more comfortable with them. But sometimes they’re so vague that they just aren’t that helpful. For instance, the heading Helpful Headings could be a list of headings or an explanation of why they are helpful.

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It is best to stay with just one type of heading. But if that is not possible because the heading is too long and cumbersome, be sure to use no more than two types of headings in one letter.

Use Active Voice

✓ **Active voice is the best way to identify who is responsible for what action.**

In an active sentence, the person or agency taking an action is the subject of the sentence. In a passive sentence, the person or item that is acted upon is the subject of the sentence. Passive sentences often do not identify who is performing the action.

☹	☺
<i>The lake was polluted by the company.</i>	<i>The company polluted the lake.</i>
<i>New regulations were proposed.</i>	<i>We proposed new regulations.</i>
<i>The following information must be included in the application for it to be considered complete.</i>	<i>You must include the following information in your complete application.</i>
<i>Bonds will be withheld in cases of noncompliance with all permits and conditions.</i>	<i>We will withhold your bond if you don't comply with all permit terms and conditions.</i>

More than any other writing technique, using active voice and specifying who is taking an action will change the character of our writing.

How do you identify passive sentences?

Passive sentences have two basic features, although both do not appear in every passive sentence.

- A past participle (generally with "ed" on the end); and
- A form of the verb "to be."

☹	☺
<i>Regulations have been proposed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.</i>	<i>We have proposed regulations.</i>
<i>The permit will be approved by the agency's State office.</i>	<i>Our State office must approve your permit.</i>

In a very few instances, passive voice may be appropriate. For example, when one action follows another as a matter of law, and there is no actor (besides the law itself) for the second action, a passive sentence may be the best method of expression.

If you do not pay the royalty on your mineral production, your lease will be terminated [by the action of the law].

✓ **To communicate effectively, write the majority of your sentences in the active voice.**

Choose the right tone for your documents

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✓ **Make sure your tone doesn't turn your readers off and prevent them from responding to your documents the way you need them to.**

Tone is important in all documents, but especially in letters. The tone of your letter will project your attitude to the reader. Although you can't hear it, tone in a letter has much the same effect as it has when you speak to someone. What's your reaction when someone speaks to you in a cold tone? Do you tune out of the conversation; pay more attention to the tone than the content; or walk away? Readers do much the same thing. When the tone of a letter is cold or harsh, many times readers will put down the letter and pick up the telephone.

How do you create a professional, compassionate tone?



There are several different techniques that you can use to create a professional, compassionate tone, depending on the content of your letter—

- Focus on the reader by using **“you” and active voice**,
- Use a **sympathetic opening** when appropriate,
- **Apologize** when we have done something wrong; and
- Use terms like **“we regret” or “unfortunately” when delivering bad news.**

Use “you” and active voice in your letters to focus on your reader.



One of the worst tone offenders in government writing is referring to people as if they were inanimate objects. Nothing turns people off more than being spoken to as if they were just a number. In the example below, the only two changes to the sentences are the use of “you” and active voice.

Can you feel the difference in the tone?

	
<i>The leg injury is disabling, therefore, the payee is entitled to benefits.</i>	<i>We found that you have a disabling leg injury, therefore, you are entitled to benefits.</i>

Be careful using “you” in letters.

It's important to refrain from using “you” if it sounds accusatory or insulting. That does not mean that you should put your letter in passive voice. Instead, put the emphasis on the agency by using “we.”

	
<i>You were not very clear.</i>	<i>We did not understand your message.</i>
<i>You did not send a payment.</i>	<i>We did not receive your payment.</i>

Sympathetic Opening

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A sympathetic opening should be used only when appropriate. For instance, if you are writing to a recent widow who is asking questions about benefits, you may want to start the letter by saying:

“We are sorry to hear about the death of your husband.” If, however, this is the fourth letter you’ve sent to the same widow, don’t just add the line by rote.

A sympathetic opening should be no more than a line or two. The sympathetic opening is important, but it should not bury the main message.

Apologies

If you are writing to correct a mistake your agency made, you should start out by apologizing for the error. Or, at the least, acknowledge that you made a mistake. And please do it in active voice.

☹	☺
<i>You were not very clear.</i>	<i>We did not understand your message.</i>
<i>You did not send a payment.</i>	<i>We did not receive your payment.</i>
<i>An error was made in calculating your refund.</i>	<i>We are sorry. We made a mistake when we calculated your refund.</i>

Delivering Bad News

When delivering bad news, it helps to temper the situation by prefacing the statement with a term like—

- We regret
- We’re sorry
- Unfortunately

Example: Unfortunately, we cannot approve your application.

In each situation, you must determine which term you find more comfortable. Is it necessary to deliver bad news in this manner? No. But it sets a tone that may keep your customer reading. And if you think about it, this is the way we usually handle things in person. In person we frequently say,

“I’m sorry but you don’t qualify for this benefit.” But many times in letters we just jump right in with, “You are not qualified for this benefit.” Which version would you rather receive?

Break your material into short sentences

✓ Use short sentences to deliver a clear message.

The best way to tell your reader what you want is a short, straightforward sentence. Complex sentences loaded with dependent clauses and exceptions confuse the reader by losing the

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main point in a forest of words. Resist the temptation to put everything in one sentence; break up your idea into its various parts and make each one the subject of its own sentence.

☹	☺
<i>For good reasons, the Secretary may grant extensions of time in 30-day increments for filing of the lease and all required bonds, provided that additional extension requests are submitted and approved before the expiration of the original 30 days or the previously granted extension.</i>	<i>We may extend the time you have to file the lease and required bonds. Each extension will be for a 30-day period. To get an extension, you must write to us giving the reasons that you need more time. We must receive your extension request in time to approve it before your current deadline or extension expires.</i>

Use the Present Tense In Your Letters

Using present tense applies mostly to regulations and manuals. In a letter you will normally tell a story in the tense that it occurred. If, however, you are giving instructions, present tense is the easiest for your readers to understand.

Use “Must” To Indicate Requirements

✓ **The word “*must*” is the clearest way to convey to your readers that they have to do something.**

“*Shall*” is one of those officious and obsolete words that has encumbered legal style writing for many years. The message that “*shall*” sends to the reader is, “***this is deadly material.***” “*Shall*” is also obsolete; when was the last time you heard it used in everyday speech? Besides being outdated, “*shall*” is imprecise. It can indicate either an obligation or a prediction. Dropping “*shall*” is a major step in making your document more reader friendly. Don't be intimidated by the argument that using “*must*” will lead to a lawsuit. Many agencies already use the word “*must*” to convey obligations with no adverse legal effects. You can avoid “*shall*” by substituting “*must*” to indicate an obligation or “*will*” to indicate that an action will occur in the future. Be careful to consider which meaning you intend to communicate to your readers.

Expressing Requirements In Your Letters

It is true that “*must*” will clearly tell your readers to do something. In talking about regulations, it is certainly preferred to “*shall.*” In letter writing, it is more an issue of tone.

You can use one of the following to convey your message clearly. It will depend on the attitude you want to convey to your readers. For instance—

- You ***need to*** complete this form to apply for benefits.
- You ***have to*** send us this information within 30 days.
- You ***must*** pay this bill or we will foreclose on your home.

✓ **Use “*must*” to make clear that the reader is required to perform a certain action.**

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Place Words Carefully

✓ **Avoid ambiguous phrasing that can mislead your reader.**

How you place words in relation to each other can greatly affect your document. Using short sentences will often make this problem disappear. In the example below, it is difficult for the reader of the old style provision to figure out which words relate to the forest products, which relate to the tribe, and which relate to the payments.

☹	☺
<p><i>Upon the request of an Indian tribe, the Secretary may provide that the purchaser of the forest products of such tribe, which are harvested under a timber sale contract, permit, or other harvest sale document, make advance deposits, or direct payments of the gross proceeds of such forest products, less any amounts segregated as forest management deductions pursuant to section 163.25, into accounts designated by such Indian tribe.</i></p>	<p><i>If you ask us, we will require purchasers of your forest products to deposit their payment into an account that you designate.</i></p> <p><i>(a) You can instruct us to deposit advance payments as well as direct payments into the account.</i></p> <p><i>(b) We will withhold from the deposit any forest management deductions under section 163.25.</i></p>

You will eliminate many potential sources of ambiguity by writing shorter sentences. The less complex the sentence, the clearer the meaning and the smaller the chance of ambiguity creeping in. Still, you must watch how you place words even in short sentences. In the example below, the reader may have to read the original statement several times to figure out that we don't mean "If you really want to have a disability . . ."

☹	☺
<p><i>If you are determined to have a disability, we will pay you the following:</i></p>	<p><i>If we determine that you have a disability, we will pay you the following:</i></p>

As you write, place your words with care to avoid possible misinterpretations or muddled meanings. A carefully written document is clear, concise, and unambiguous.

✓ **Draft your document with care to eliminate unclear phrasing.**

Avoid Words and Constructions That Cause Confusion

✓ **Your document will be clearer if you avoid words and phrases that your readers might not understand.**

Define each abbreviation or acronym the first time you use it.

In general, use abbreviations only to refer to terms that are central to the document. For example, if a regulation is about the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, you can refer to it as CERCLA. But do not abbreviate terms

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that you use only one or a few times. Write them out each time. And whatever you do, don't overwhelm your reader with strings of acronyms and abbreviations.

Use the same term consistently to identify a specific thought or object.

For example, if you use the term "senior citizens" to refer to a group, continue to use this term throughout your document. Do not substitute another term, such as "the elderly," which cause the reader to wonder if you are referring to the same group.

Define words in a way that does not conflict with ordinary or accepted usage.

If possible, use a word in a way that is consistent with its everyday meaning rather than creating a new meaning for your document. A change in meaning may confuse the reader, and you create ambiguity if you use the word elsewhere in your document in its ordinary sense. For example, don't redefine "automobile" to refer to vehicles such as motorcycles or large trucks.

Avoid "noun sandwiches."

Too much government writing uses too many noun clusters--groups of nouns "sandwiched" together. Avoid these confusing constructions by using more prepositions and articles to clarify the relationships among the words.

☹	☺
<i>Underground mine worker safety protection procedures development.</i>	<i>Developing procedures to protect the safety of workers in underground mines.</i>

Use pronouns that clearly refer to a specific noun. If a pronoun could refer to more than one person or object in a sentence, repeat the name of the person or object or rewrite the sentence.

☹	☺
<i>After the Administrator appoints an Assistant Administrator, he or she must ...</i>	<i>After the Administrator appoints an Assistant Administrator, the Assistant Administrator must ...</i>

Avoid confusing legal and technical jargon.

Readers can do without archaic jargon such as "hereafter," "heretofore," and therewith. There's also a long list of simple words you can substitute for jargon on our web site, plainlanguage.gov, in the reference library.

You may sometimes need to use a technical term to communicate accurately and convey a precise meaning. Don't be cowed into overusing technical terms. The argument that technical terms are "necessary" is greatly overused. Try to substitute everyday language for jargon as often as possible. Use technical terms only when truly necessary and only when your document will be read only by technical readers. If your document is intended for both technical and non-technical readers, write for the non-technical reader.

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Avoid these Words and Expressions

abeyance	hereby	same [as a substitute for "it", "he", "him", "she", or "her"]	whenever
above [as an adjective]	herein	thenceforth	whereas
afore-granted	hereinafter	Thereunto	whereof
aforementioned	hereinbefore	to wit	whosoever
Aforesaid	hereunto	under-mentioned	within-named
before-mentioned	pursuant	Unto	witneseth
henceforward	said [as a substitute for "the", "that", or those]	whatsoever	

Avoid stilted, wordy language.

Wordy, dense construction is one of the biggest problems in government writing. Nothing is more confusing to the reader than long, complex sentences containing multiple phrases and clauses.

☹	☺
<i>If the State Secretary finds that an individual has received a payment to which the individual was not entitled, whether or not the payment was due to the individual's fault or misrepresentation, the individual shall be liable to repay to State the total sum of the payment to which the individual was not entitled.</i>	<i>If the State agency finds that you received a payment that you weren't entitled to, you must pay the entire sum back.</i>

✓ **Check your writing for jargon, abbreviations, noun sandwiches, and other constructions that can confuse your reader.**

Use contractions to make your writing more accessible

✓ **Contractions improve clarity and help your reader.**

Yes, Virginia, contractions are acceptable in government writing. They are especially appropriate in letters. But they must be used with discretion. Just as you shouldn't bullet everything on a page, you shouldn't make a contraction out of every possible word in a letter.

Contractions help the reader. Readers are used to hearing words in the contracted form. So, when readers see "**would not**," they turn it into "**wouldn't**." That means that using contractions speeds reading. Another benefit is that many readers miss the second word and take the exact opposite meaning. They read "**would not**" as "**would**." That doesn't happen when the word is "**wouldn't**."

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Most people will agree that contractions are less formal than writing out both words. As in any other type of writing, it's important to focus on your reader. If you would speak more formally to someone, then you should probably write to them the same way, without contractions.

In a few cases, there is a difference in tone between the contracted form and the two word form—

“can’t” and “cannot” or “don’t” and “do not.”

More Emphatic Message	Softer Message
<i>You cannot come in now.</i>	<i>You can't come in now.</i>
<i>Do not enter this building.</i>	<i>Don't enter this building.</i>
<i>Do not enter this building without permission.</i>	<i>Don't enter this building without permission.</i>

✓ **Use contractions to make your writing more accessible to your readers.**

Use lots of informative headings

✓ **Headings help readers find their way through a document and locate information they care about.**

Divide Long or Complex Letters Into Short Sections and Use Informative Headings.

Headings will help you keep your sections short, especially if your headings are very specific. Look at your letter when it's completed. If you see sections that are too long, check to see if everything in that section belongs under your heading. If not, it usually means that either your heading is too general or you've placed information under a heading that does not belong there.

Heading Too General	Break it into Two Sections
<p>Helpful Headings</p> <p>Headings are helpful because they guide a reader to find information. They are also helpful because they help the writer to organize. Headings come in several types including topic, statement, and questions. All of these headings help outline the document for both the reader and writer. An example of a topic heading is “Benefit Information.” An example of a statement is ...</p>	<p>Why are Headings Helpful?</p> <p>Headings are helpful because they guide a reader to find information. They are also helpful because they help the writer to organize. Headings help outline the document for both the reader and writer.</p> <p>Headings come in several types including—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • topic • statement • questions <p>An example of a topic heading is “Benefit Information.” An example of a statement heading is ...</p>

✓ **Develop your headings carefully. They are one of the most useful tools you can use to develop an appealing, understandable document.**

Break your material into short, understandable sections

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- ✓ **Short sections break up material into easily understood segments that are visually appealing to the reader.**

Short sections are easier to organize and understand. Long sections are confusing and visually unappealing.

Cover only one topic in each paragraph

- ✓ **Limit each paragraph or section to one topic to help the reader follow the document.**

The idea of limiting paragraphs to one idea is an important key to clarity. Here's a segment from a Veterans Administration's letter. The letter and the rewrite are taken from their *Reader Focus Writing Handbook*. In the first example, the original in one paragraph is not only overwhelming, it's hard to understand just what you are entitled to without reading it several times.

One Paragraph Example: *In the first example, so much information is given in the paragraph that it's hard to understand any of it.*

If, due to your active military status, you will suffer a reduction of income and find it difficult to maintain your mortgage obligation, the Act provides that the interest rate of your mortgage can be reduced to 6 percent per annum until your period of active duty has ended. You will incur no penalty or obligation to repay the forgiven interest amount. Therefore, you should inform the holder of your mortgage (or its agent) of your inability to continue the payments required by your mortgage contract. If you have already fallen behind in your monthly payments, the holder of your loan can defer payment of the delinquent amount until your period of active duty has ended, and at that time you should make arrangements for a repayment schedule.

Two Paragraphs Example: *In this second example, the information is broken into two separate paragraphs: one about the type of protection you can receive; the other about how to qualify. Notice that the first paragraph is even easier to follow because it uses a vertical list.*

This is the protection you can receive until your period of active duty service has ended:

- *Your mortgage holder can reduce your annual interest rate to 6%.*
- *You will not have to pay a penalty or the forgiven interest amount (the amount (the amount above the 6% rate).*
- *Your mortgage holder can postpone payment of any money you may now owe.*

To qualify for this protection, you must tell the mortgage holder that you will lose

income while you are in active service, and it will be hard to keep up your mortgage payments. You should also make arrangements for a repayment schedule.

Reminder: Remember to show the mortgage holder a copy of your order to report to active duty.

- ✓ **Put only one topic in each paragraph to help your reader keep each idea separate.**

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Use Lists In Your Letters and Instructions

✓ **Vertical lists highlight important topics and make it easy for the reader to identify all elements in a series.**

Vertical lists highlight important topics and make it easy for the reader to identify all elements in a series of requirements or procedures. In the example below, we've created a kind of a checklist for the reader.

☹	☺
<p><i>When you come to class you should bring a tablet, a pen or pencil, the form you just completed, two copies of your 171, and a resume if you have one.</i></p>	<p><i>When you come to class you should bring the following—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A tablet</i> • <i>A pen or pencil</i> • <i>The form you just completed</i> • <i>Two copies of your 171</i> • <i>A resume (if you already have one)</i>

Normally you should use solid round or square bullets for a letter. Bullets are not the place to be overly creative. Large creative bullets with strange shapes tend to distract the reader. However, in some circumstances numbers are a helpful option.

You can best use numbers when you are highlighting the order of steps in a process, or when you are making a point that there are a certain number of items in the list.

When to Use Numbers for Your Vertical List	
Chronological Order	Highlighting the Number of Items
<p><i>There are several steps to apply--</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete the application.</i> • <i>Sign the application.</i> • <i>Have your supervisor review and sign the application.</i> • <i>Keep the bottom copy.</i> • <i>Return the rest of the application to Human Resources.</i> 	<p><i>We need to know your opinion about the location of our annual meeting. We narrowed it down to three choices—</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Our own office complex</i> 2. <i>White House Conference Center</i> 3. <i>Cameron Hotel</i>
<p><i>Numbering the list above emphasizes the student should keep a copy signed by the supervisor.</i></p>	<p><i>Numbering the list above reinforces the three choices mentioned in the introductory sentence.</i></p>

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Some Other Rules About Vertical Lists

Here are some additional rules you should follow to make it easier to read your vertical lists.

- Always use a lead-in sentence to explain your lists.
- It is helpful to indent your vertical list from the lead-in sentence margin.
- Never center a vertical list.

☹	☺
<p><i>Classroom supplies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A tablet</i> • <i>A pen or pencil</i> • <i>The paperwork you sent us when you first applied for class</i> 	<p><i>Classroom Supplies</i></p> <p><i>When you come to class, you should bring the following--</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A tablet</i> • <i>A pen or pencil</i> • <i>The paperwork you sent us when you first applied for class.</i>
<p><i>Without a lead-in sentence, it is not clear who is to bring the supplies to class. Centering the bullets may make a nice pattern, but it makes it very difficult to see where statements begin and end.</i></p>	<p><i>In this sample the lead-in sentence makes it clear who is to bring the supplies to class. Indenting makes it easier to see how the information is arranged.</i></p>

✓ **Use vertical lists to attract the reader's eye to important information and to break up large pieces of information.**

Use emphasis to highlight important concepts

✓ **Use *bold and italics* to make important concepts stand out.**

Emphasis techniques, like a combination of ***bold and italics***, help bring out important points in your letters and other documents. The most important rule to remember is to limit emphasis techniques to important information. Putting everything in bold, for instance, is like shouting all the time. It makes it impossible for the reader to know what is really important.

PUTTING EVERYTHING IN CAPITAL LETTERS IS NOT A GOOD EMPHASIS TECHNIQUE. ALTHOUGH IT MAY DRAW THE READER'S ATTENTION TO THE SECTION, IT MAKES IT HARDER TO READ. Similarly, underlining will draw the reader's attention to the section, but it makes it hard on the eyes. ***In both of these cases, it is better to use bold and italics for only the important issues.***

Using "Notes" or "Reminders" in ***bold and italics*** is a very effective way to emphasize information. Keep in mind that "Reminders" should only be used to reinforce information. "Notes" can be used for anything.

Using Reminders for Emphasis	Using Notes for Emphasis
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<p><i>How Do I Apply?</i></p> <p><i>Please do the following within 31 days:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete the application</i> • <i>Sign the application</i> • <i>Return it to the following address:</i> <p># XXXXXXXXXXXXX # XXXXXXXXXXXXX # XXXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p><i>Reminder: You must return the application within 31 days.</i></p>	<p><i>How Do I Apply?</i></p> <p><i>Please do the following within 31 days:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete the application</i> • <i>Sign the application</i> • <i>Return it to the following address:</i> <p># XXXXXXXXXXXXX # XXXXXXXXXXXXX # XXXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p><i>Note: Be sure to complete the application on the next page.</i></p>
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✓ Use emphasis techniques wisely, don't overuse them or they lose their power.

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Section 4. Additional Indian Affairs Guidance.

1. Date of Incoming Letter. Whenever applicable, include the date of the incoming letter in the opening sentence, because this information helps the recipient process the letter.

2. Identify Constituent. When you answer congressional inquiries on behalf of a constituent, include the constituent's name in the reply.

"Thank you for your letter of May 1, XXXX, on behalf of (constituent's name) concerning . . ."

3. Overdue Responses. If the reply is written more than one month after the date of the incoming letter, use an apology statement as the last line of the first paragraph:

"We apologize for the delay in responding to your letter."

4. Responses on behalf of the President or the Secretary. When preparing responses for Indian Affairs' signature to letters that were directed to the Secretary or to the President, use a phrase such as—

"President (Secretary) has asked us to thank you for. . . ."

"Thank you for your letter to President (Secretary)"

"On behalf of President (Secretary), thank you for. . . ."

When it is definitely inappropriate to express appreciation, you may use phrases similar to the following:

"President (Secretary) asked that we reply to. . . ."

"We received your letter to President (Secretary) concerning. . ."

5. Closing Text. Closing sentences should be used to eliminate abrupt or impersonal endings. Avoid sentences that encourage more letters, such as *"If we can be of further assistance, please let us know."* Instead, use a sentence that seeks to bring closure, such as—

"Thank you for your interest in Indian trust reform."

"We appreciate knowing of your concerns with Indian gaming."

"We trust that this information will be helpful to your constituent."

If appropriate, the closing sentence may include the name of a contact office and telephone number so the recipient may follow up if there are further questions. When providing this information in a letter to a Member of Congress, phrase the sentence so that it is clear that the Senator or Congressman is not expected to call personally—

"If additional information is needed, your staff (or your constituent) may contact the (Title . . ."

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6. Abbreviations. Only the most commonly used abbreviations are included in this handbook. Refer to the U. S. Government Correspondence Manual, 1992-GSA, for a more complete list.

Code of Federal Regulations	CFR
United States Code	U.S.C.
Public Law	Pub. L.
U.S. Statutes at Large	Stat.
Time	10 a.m. or 2 p.m.
Executive Order	E.O.
Section of a Public Law	Sec.
Bureau of Indian Affairs	BIA
Department of the Interior	DOI or Department

7. Capitalization. Refer to the Government Correspondence Manual for a more complete list. Capitalize the following words only when they refer to a specific proper noun:

tribe	director
tribal council	central office
reservation	office
regional office	nation
agency	task force
field office	branch chief

8. Gender Neutral Substitutes.

In place of . . .	Use . . .
businessmen	business owners, business executives, business managers, business people
salesmen	sales representatives, salespersons, salesclerks, sales staff, sales force
foremen	Supervisors
Policemen	police officers
Mailmen	mail carriers
congressmen	members of congress, representatives
Mankind	people, humanity, the human race, human beings
man-hours	worker-hours
Manpower	work force, human energy

9. Closing Department Controlled Correspondence. If a Department controlled correspondence cannot be completely answered within the 10-day deadline, use one of the sample form letters shown below. The selected letter should be double-spaced and prepared for the Deputy Director's signature within 5 days of receipt of the incoming letter.

This option should be used sparingly when responding to Members of Congress.

(1) *Thank you for your letter of _____ concerning _____. The Department is currently reviewing all the comments/suggestions received. Please be assured your views will be seriously considered as we complete this process. If you need further information, please contact _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.*

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- (2) Secretary _____ has asked me to respond to your letter of _____ concerning _____. We are currently reviewing your suggestions/comments (or all comments). If you have further questions or concerns, please contact _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.
- (3) We received your comments/views/suggestions of _____ on _____. I can assure you that your comments will be given serious consideration during this review process. For further information, contact _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. I appreciate your continued interest in the Department of the Interior.
- (4) Thank you for your letter of _____ regarding _____. I apologize for the delay in my response. I understand there are still on-going meetings between _____ and _____. I know how important this issue is to _____ and I hope we can complete by (date). If you have any questions, please call _____ at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Chapter 10 — Correspondence Tracking System (Washington Area Only)

(Chapter 10 Reserved. Chapter to be completed.)

A. Clearance through Indian Affairs - Executive Secretariat. To better ensure that correspondence prepared for signature by senior management is properly formatted, grammatically correct, and properly punctuated, all memoranda, letters, and Federal Register documents prepared for signature or signature by the Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, a Deputy Assistant Secretary, or the Assistant Secretary must be routed through the Indian Affairs - Executive Secretariat (IA-ES) for entry into the automated tracking system. Originating offices are responsible for ensuring that all required surnames, including those of DOI offices, are obtained before transferring the correspondence to IA-ES.

The following documents are not subject to clearance through IA-ES:

- (1) Leave Slips,
- (2) Travel Authorizations and Travel Vouchers,
- (3) Training Forms,
- (2) Draft or final testimony,
- (3) Draft or final responses to questions submitted by congressional Committees,
- (4) Draft or final speeches,
- (5) Letters transmitting responses to congressional hearing questions submitted for the record;
- (6) Draft legislation;
- (7) Contracts or cooperative agreements,
- (8) Reimbursable support agreements,
- (9) Memoranda of Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding, and
- (10) Self-Governance Annual Funding Agreements.

B. Indian Affairs Document Tracking System. An automated tracking system is used to maintain and track controlled correspondence and for other documents that are to be signed by the Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, a Deputy Assistant Secretary, or the Assistant Secretary. All documents to be signed by a senior official, including those that do not have to be cleared through IA-ES, must be sent under the cover of a system-generated Route Sheet created by the action office or an IA-ES Controlled Correspondence Route Sheet.

C. DOI Executive Secretariat Reporting Requirements. In order to comply with the Department's reporting requirements on overdue correspondence, for all Department-controlled correspondence, each action office must ensure that an up-to-date status report is entered in the Indian Affairs tracking system by Thursday of each week.

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D. User's Guide. The following pages provide guidance on entering data in the system, identifying the status of documents in process, and viewing or printing system reports. New users should request system access through the IA-ES.

*To be continued
(Correspondence Tracking System)*