

Handbook of Style

Forms of Address

Since the relationship between correspondents affects the form of address used in letters, no rigid guidelines can be set down for all occasions. It is to be understood in the following examples of generally accepted form that when two salutations are shown, the formal styling precedes the informal; that if the formal address shown for a man is ``Sir," the formal address for a woman is ``Madam," and vice versa; and that if the informal address shown for a man is ``Mr.," the informal address for a woman is ``Mrs.," ``Miss," or ``Ms.," and vice versa.

Addressee	Form of Address		Salutation
abbot	clerical and religious orders		
	The Right Reverend John R. Smith, O.S.B.	Abbot of Ð	Right Reverend and dear Father:
archbishop	The Most Reverend Archbishop of Ð		Your Excellency:
	<i>or</i> The Most Reverend John R. Smith	Archbishop of Ð	Dear Archbishop Smith:
archdeacon	The Venerable the Archdeacon of Ð		Venerable Sir:
bishop, Catholic	The Most Reverend John R. Smith	Bishop of Ð	Your Excellency: Dear Bishop Smith:
bishop, Episcopal	The Right Reverend John R. Smith	Bishop of Ð	Right Reverend Sir: Dear Bishop Smith:
bishop, other denomination(s)	The Reverend John R. Smith		Reverend Sir: Dear Bishop Smith:
brotherhood, Catholic, member of	Brother James, S.J.		Dear Brother James:
brotherhood, Catholic, superior of	Brother Michael, S.J., Superior		Dear Brother Michael:
cardinal	His Eminence	John Cardinal Smith	Your Eminence: Dear Cardinal Smith:
clergyman, Protestant	The Reverend John R. Smith		Dear Sir:
	<i>or</i> The Reverend Dr. John R. Smith (if having a doctor's degree)		Dear Mr. Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Dr. Smith:

dean (of a cathedral)	The Very Reverend John R. Smith <i>or</i> Dean John R. Smith	Very Reverend Sir: Dear Dean Smith:
monsignor	The Right Reverend Monsignor John R. Smith	Dear Monsignor Smith:
patriarch (of an Eastern church)	His Beatitude the Patriarch of Ð	Most Reverend Lord:
pope	His Holiness Pope Ð <i>or</i> His Holiness the Pope	Your Holiness: <i>or</i> Most Holy Father:
priest	The Reverend Father Smith <i>or</i> The Reverend John R. Smith	Dear Father Smith: Dear Father:
rabbi	Rabbi John R. Smith <i>or</i> Rabbi John R. Smith, D.D. (if having a doctor's degree)	Dear Rabbi Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Dr. Smith:
sisterhood, member of	Sister Mary Angelica, S.C.	Dear Sister Mary Angelica: Dear Sister:
sisterhood, superior of	The Reverend Mother Superior, S.C.	Reverend Mother: Dear Reverend Mother:
college and university officials		
chancellor of a university	Dr. Amelia R. Smith Chancellor	Dear Dr. Smith:
dean of a college or university	Dean John R. Smith	Dear Dean Smith:
president of a college or university	President Amelia R. Smith <i>or</i> Dr. Amelia R. Smith	Dear President Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Dr. Smith:
professor, assistant or associate	Mr. John R. Smith <i>or</i> Dr. John R. Smith Assistant/Associate Professor of Ð	Dear Mr. Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Dr. Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Professor Smith:

professor, full	Professor Amelia R. Smith <i>or</i> Dr. Amelia R. Smith Professor of Ð	Dear Professor Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Dr. Smith:
ambassador, American	diplomats The Honorable John R. Smith American Ambassador <i>or if in Central or South America</i> The Ambassador of the United States of America	Sir: Dear Mr. Ambassador:
ambassador, foreign	Her Excellency Amelia R. Smith Ambassador of Ð <i>or if from Great Britain</i> Her Excellency The Right Honorable Amelia R. Smith British Ambassador	Excellency: Dear Madame Ambassador:
chargeÂ d'affaires, American	John R. Smith, Esq. American ChargeÂ d'Affaires <i>or if in Central or South America</i> The United States ChargeÂ d'Affaires	Sir: Dear Mr. Smith:
chargeÂ d'affaires, foreign	Ms. Amelia R. Smith ChargeÂ d'Affaires of Ð	Madame: Dear Ms. Smith:
consul, American	The American Consul <i>or if in Central or South America</i> The Consul of the United States of America <i>or if individual name is known</i> John R. Smith, Esq. American Consul <i>or if in Central or South America</i> Consul of the United States of America	Sir: Sir: Dear Mr. Smith:
consul, foreign	The Consul of Ð <i>or if individual name is known</i> The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Ð Consul <i>or</i> Consul of Ð	Sir: Madam: Dear Ms. Smith:
minister, American	The Honorable John R. Smith American Minister <i>or if in Central or South America</i> Minister of the United States of America	Sir: Dear Mr. Minister:

minister, foreign	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Minister of Ð	Madame: Dear Madame Minister:
secretary-general, U.N.	His Excellency John R. Smith Secretary General of the United Nations	Excellency: Dear Mr. Secretary-General: <i>or</i> Dear Mr. Smith:

foreign heads of state		
premier	Her Excellency Amelia R. Smith Premier of Ð	Excellency: Dear Madame Premier:
president of a republic	His Excellency John R. Smith President of Ð	Excellency: Dear Mr. President:
prime minister	Her Excellency Amelia R. Smith	Excellency: Dear Madame Prime Minister:

government officials, federal		
attorney general	The Honorable John R. Smith The Attorney General	Sir: Dear Mr. Attorney General:
cabinet officer addressed as ``Secretary"	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Secretary of Ð <i>or</i> The Secretary of Ð	Madam: Dear Madam Secretary:
chairman of a (sub)committee, U.S. Congress (stylings shown apply to House of Representatives and Senate)	The Honorable John R. Smith Chairman Committee on Ð United States Senate	Dear Mr. Chairman: Dear Senator Smith:

commissioner	<i>if appointed</i>	Dear Madam Commissioner:
	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Commissioner	Dear Ms. Smith:
	<i>if career</i>	
	Ms. Amelia R. Smith Commissioner	

director (as of an independent federal agency)	The Honorable John R. Smith Ð Agency	Dear Mr. Smith:
former elected government official	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith	Madam: Dear Ms. Smith:

judge	The Honorable John R. Smith Judge of the United States District Court for Ð District of Ð	Sir: Dear Judge Smith:
president	The President The White House <i>or</i> The Honorable Amelia R. Smith President of the United States The White House	Madam President: Dear Madam President:
representative, United States Congress	The Honorable John R. Smith United States House of Representatives <i>or for local address</i> The Honorable John R. Smith Representative in Congress	Dear Sir: Dear Representative Smith: Dear Mr. Smith:
senator, United States Senate	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith United States Senate	Madam: Dear Senator Smith:
speaker, United States House of Representatives	The Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives <i>or</i> The Honorable John R. Smith Speaker of the House of Representatives	Sir: Dear Mr. Speaker: Dear Mr. Smith:
supreme court, associate justice	Madam Justice Smith The Supreme Court of the United States	Madam: Dear Madam Justice: Dear Madam Justice Smith:
supreme court, chief justice	The Chief Justice of the United States The Supreme Court of the United States <i>or</i> The Chief Justice The Supreme Court	Sir: Dear Mr. Chief Justice:
special assistant to the President	Ms. Amelia R. Smith	Dear Ms. Smith:
undersecretary of a department	The Honorable John R. Smith Undersecretary of Ð	Dear Mr. Smith:
vice president	The Vice President of the United States United States Senate <i>or</i> The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Vice President of the United States	Madam: Dear Madam Vice President:

	government officials, state and local	
alderman	The Honorable John R. Smith Alderman	Dear Mr. Smith:
	<i>or</i> Alderman John R. Smith	Dear Alderman Smith:
assemblyman	Ð see REPRESENTATIVE, STATE	
city attorney	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith	Dear Ms. Smith:
clerk of a court	John R. Smith, Esq. Clerk of the Court of Ð	Dear Mr. Smith:
councilman	Ð see ALDERMAN	
county clerk	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Clerk of Ð County	Dear Ms. Smith:
county treasurer	Ð see COUNTY CLERK	
delegate	Ð see REPRESENTATIVE, STATE	
governor	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith <i>or</i> The Honorable John R. Smith Governor of Ð	Sir: Dear Governor Smith:
judge, local	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Judge of the Ð Court of Ð	Dear Judge Smith:
judge, state	The Honorable John R. Smith Judge of the Ð Court	Dear Judge Smith:
lieutenant governor	The Honorable Lieutenant Governor of Ð <i>or</i> The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Lieutenant Governor of Ð	Madam: Dear Ms. Smith:
mayor	The Honorable John R. Smith Mayor of Ð	Sir: Dear Mayor Smith:
representative, state	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith House of Representatives	Madam: Dear Ms. Smith:
secretary of state	The Honorable Secretary of State of Ð <i>or</i> The Honorable John R. Smith Secretary of State of Ð	Sir: Dear Mr. Secretary:

selectman	Ð see ALDERMAN	
senate, state, president of	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith President of the Senate of the State (or Commonwealth) of Ð	Madam: Dear Ms. Smith: Dear Senator Smith:
senator, state	The Honorable John R. Smith The Senate of Ð	Sir: Dear Senator Smith:
speaker, state assembly, house of delegates, or house of representatives	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Speaker of Ð	Madam: Dear Ms. Smith:
supreme court, state, associate justice	The Honorable John R. Smith Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Ð	Sir: Dear Justice Smith:
supreme court, state, chief justice	The Honorable Amelia R. Smith Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ð	Madam: Dear Madam Chief Justice:

military ranks ± a typical but not exhaustive list

admiral vice admiral rear admiral	<i>(full rank + full name + comma + abbreviation of branch of service)</i>	Sir: Dear Admiral Smith:
airman	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Airman Smith:
cadet	Cadet John R. Smith United States Military Academy	Dear Mr. Smith:
captain (air force, army, coast guard, marine corps, or navy)	<i>(full rank + full name + comma + abbreviation of branch of service)</i>	Dear Captain Smith:
colonel lieutenant colonel (air force, army, or marine corps)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Colonel Smith:
commander (coast guard or navy)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Commander Smith:
corporal	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Corporal Smith:

first lieutenant second lieutenant (air force, army, or marine corps)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Lieutenant Smith:
general lieutenant general major general brigadier general (air force, army, or marine corps)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Sir: Dear General Smith:
lieutenant commander lieutenant lieutenant (jg) ensign (coast guard or navy)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Mr. Smith:
major (air force, army, or marine corps)	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Major Smith:
master sergeant [a typical example for other enlisted ranks having compound titles not shown here]	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Sergeant Smith:
midshipman	Midshipman Amelia R. Smith United States Naval Academy	Dear Midshipman Smith:
petty officer <i>and</i> chief petty officer ranks	<i>(full rank + full name + comma + abbreviation of branch of service)</i>	Dear Mr. Smith: <i>or</i> Dear Chief Smith:
private	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Private Smith:
seaman	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Seaman Smith:
specialist	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Specialist Smith:
warrant officer	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear Mr. Smith:
other ranks not here listed	<i>(same as above)</i>	Dear + rank + surname:
miscellaneous professional ranks and titles		
attorney	Mr. John R. Smith Attorney-at-Law	Dear Mr. Smith: <i>or if having JD degree</i>

	<i>or</i> John Smith, Esq.	Dear Dr. Smith:
dentist	Amelia R. Smith, D.D.S. (office address)	Dear Dr. Smith:
	<i>or</i> Dr. Amelia R. Smith (home address)	
physician	John R. Smith, M.D. (office address)	Dear Dr. Smith:
	<i>or</i> Dr. John Smith (home address)	
veterinarian	John Smith, D.V.M. (office address)	Dear Dr. Smith
	<i>or</i> Dr. John Smith (home address)	