Who Receives Your Formal Letter(s)?

When you are posted to a U.S. mission abroad, it is customary to write to the principal officer to express your pleasure with obtaining the assignment. This letter should arrive no earlier than six weeks before your arrival. If you are assigned to a consulate, it is routine to send a courtesy letter to the country’s ambassador. Be sure to confirm all names and titles with your area technician. If time is short, consider sending an e-mail copy of the letter to the ambassador’s OMS to process the hard copy letter that you are mailing.

Official State Department stationery/envelopes available at:

Harry S. Truman (Main State)
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520
- The Employee Services Center in Room 1252 (Foreign Service Lounge)*

George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (FSI)
4000 Arlington Boulevard (SA-42)
Arlington, VA 22204
- The Overseas Briefing Center in Room E-2126*
- The Orientation Division in Room F-2315 *
- The Registrar’s Office in Room F-1245

*Computers available
For additional available computers, consult with the Registrar’s Office.
Guidance for Letter to Principal Officer

This letter fulfills courtesy requirements, lets the principal officer know your arrival date, and informs them of your contact with the management counselor. Most importantly, it reveals something of who you are. In most cases, it will be your introduction to this person. A workable length is three paragraphs.

How to Address Officers

Ambassador (Male):
Title: The Honorable Charles W. Anderson
Salutation: Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Ambassador (Female):
Title: The Honorable Kathleen S. Holden
Salutation: Dear Madam Ambassador:

Chargé d’Affaires
Title: Ms. Denise W. Williams
Chargé d’Affaires
(“Chargé d’Affaires ad interim” should be used if the post is only temporarily without an ambassador.)
Salutation: Dear Ms. Williams:

Consul General
Title: Mr. Douglas E. Carter
Consul General
Salutation: Dear Mr. Carter:

Consul
Title: Ms. Mary J. Bryant
Consul
Salutation: Dear Ms. Bryant:

What Should I Write About?

Paragraph 1
Introduce yourself and express pleasure at your assignment.

Paragraph 2
Relate some relevant details about your background and experience. Be highly selective. Fluency in the language of the country should be noted, but if you want to improve your language skills, keep that to yourself. Mention family and any specific skills they have that may be useful to the mission, for example: “My husband, Greg is fluent in Spanish from Peace Corps days, and he is qualified to teach ESL.”

Paragraph 3
Say when you expect to arrive. Express something of your intention to serve. Close with a pleasantry. (You may choose to place the closing in a fourth paragraph).
What NOT to Say

- Your letter should not exceed one page in length.
- Do not lobby for another job. (Example: “As an unconed junior officer on a consular tour, I am hoping to do a lot of economic reporting as well.”)
- Do not drop names. (Example: “I went to Choate with your son Kenneth.”) Reveal these personal connections only in person.
- Do not say what you expect the job to do for you. (Example: “I am happy to be posted to Kathmandu because I’ll have time to finish my dissertation.”) Your superiors are probably only interested in what you are going to do for the mission.
- Do not write anything that you do not want to be public knowledge.
- Be mindful of the tone of your writing.
- Check format, grammar, and spelling.

How to Print an Envelope Using Microsoft Word

- Open your completed letter to the ambassador.
- Click on the MAILINGS tab at the top of the page.
- Click on the ENVELOPES tab, located on the left.
- A window will appear with your delivery address already added.
- The OMIT box should be checked for the return address.
- Load your envelope into the printer by opening the drop-down drawer in the middle of the printer. There will be a slot to place it; align the sliders to fit the envelope.
- Make sure the State Department address is face side up and the return address is closest to you.
- Press PRINT from the window, not from the screen.
- Once it is printed, handwrite “Your Name, SA-42” in the top left-hand corner above the Department of State return address.
- Deliver the letter to the FSI Mailroom F 1327. No postage is necessary.

How to Send by Pouch or via APO/FPO:

Letters may be sent through the interdepartmental correspondence system from any annex or office in the Department of State if you use a State Department return address. If you are a member of an A-100 class or other orientation class, your return address at NFATC is:

(Your Name), Registrar’s Office, Room F-1245 (SA-42)

If you use the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center for your return address on the envelope and expect a reply, use an actual address where you can be contacted up until your time of departure on the inside of the envelope.
Format of official pouch address or APO/FPO address:

The Honorable John D. Smith  
7050 Baku Place  
Washington, DC 20521-7050

Ms. Charlotte Evans  
Deputy Chief of Mission  
2430 Nouakchott Place  
Washington, DC 20521-2430

Mr. /Ms. Someone Evans  
Unit XXXX, Box YYYY  
APO, AE 09080-YYYY

(Never add embassy name, official title, or country on APO mail)

The only time the 20521 pouch zip code should be used is for official correspondence or packages sent within the State Department’s system (without a stamp). Mail sent from outside the State Department to a pouch address must go through irradiation, which causes lengthy delays.

Important note: Mexican posts use regular U.S. mail addresses for both official correspondence and personal mail because they are faster than sending via pouch. Newly assigned officers to these posts should consult with management section to determine the most expeditious address to write their letters of introduction to the principal officer.

If you use a personal return address, postage is necessary for interdepartmental correspondence, and it must be sent through the U.S. Postal Service (causing the extensive delays mentioned above). If speed of delivery is important, and the post has an APO or FPO address, sending the letter to that address through the U.S. Postal Service would be the fastest option.

To confirm 9-digit zip codes and/or APO/FPO addresses, refer to State Department intranet site or see list posted in Overseas Briefing Center.

Please go to http://go.usa.gov/3vE4F for a template, created by a fellow Foreign Service officer or create your own using the guidelines that follow:
The Honorable Someone B. Smith  
XXXX [city name] Place  
Washington, DC  20521-XXXX

Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:

[Type your first paragraph here. This paragraph should introduce yourself. Be sure to express your pleasure in the assignment. A good rule of thumb is to include at least three sentences in each paragraph. Be sure to hit spacebar twice after each period.]

[Type your second paragraph here. This paragraph should relate some relevant details about your background and experiences. If you are bringing family to post, perhaps mention them and anything the principal official might find interesting or useful to the mission.]

[Type your third paragraph here. Be sure to let the principal official know when you plan to arrive to post. Express something of your intention to serve. Close with a pleasantry.]

Sincerely,

Jane E. Doe
## Communicating with Post of Assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambassador (COM)</td>
<td>Official letter</td>
<td>Notify once, 4-6 weeks prior to arrival</td>
<td>Formal introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCM (see supervisor)</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Same timing as Ambassador unless DCM is your supervisor</td>
<td>Courtesy contact: attach copy of COM letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (DCM if boss)</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Early/frequent</td>
<td>Information exchange: job responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSO</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Early/frequent</td>
<td>Information exchange: Shipping, housing, arrival dates &amp; arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLO</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Early/frequent</td>
<td>Information exchange: post life and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predecessor</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Early/frequent</td>
<td>Information exchange: job related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative / Management Officer</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>Early/once</td>
<td>Courtesy contact to notify of communication with others (cc. on e-mails going to GSO) If small post without GSO, Mgt would receive all the contacts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See 5 FAH-1 H-420 PREPARING LETTERS for more information: [http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/05fah01/05fah010420.html#H421](http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/05fah01/05fah010420.html#H421)

### Send Formal, Official Emails To:

#### Deputy Chief of Mission
This should be similar to the letter to the ambassador but sent via e-mail, perhaps including a copy of the letter sent to the ambassador as a courtesy.

#### Supervisor
In addition to the courtesy letter to the principal officer, you should write to your supervisor as soon as possible after you receive your Assignment Notification (TMONE). Your supervisor is the best person to answer questions relating to your job responsibilities, including information regarding titles for calling cards. Your e-mail to him/her will be a combination courtesy and inquiry communiqué.
**Format for Initial Email to Supervisor:**

Dear Mr. Brown:

I have recently been assigned to ____ as a ____, and I look forward to this assignment and to becoming a member of the official (Embassy) (Consulate) staff.

I look forward to working with you and the rest of the ____ section. I would appreciate any suggestions you might have on people I should see as I prepare for my assignment.

Sincerely yours, (typed full name)

***

In a later message to your supervisor, be sure to include your arrival details.

**Management Officer/GSO**

The management officer at the mission can answer your questions about issues such as living conditions, cars, appliances, consumables, schools, pets, medical services, employment opportunities for dependents, or community services. He/She must also know your travel plans. Be sure to include all details of your itinerary: stopovers en route, name of carrier and flight number, arrival date and time of arrival if driving to post and the like. Also include information on the number of persons accompanying you, their names and the ages of the children, and pets that are accompanying you or arriving later.

**SEND INFORMAL, UNOFFICIAL EMAILS TO:**

**Community Liaison Office Coordinator (CLO)**

One of your best sources of information on life at post may be the community liaison office coordinator (CLO). Many overseas posts have a CLO, who sends newcomers information to help them prepare for their move. E-mails to the CLO can be of a more personal nature. You or your spouse may write this message as soon as you have received your assignment. For the name of the CLO at your post, call the CLO Support Officer in the Family Liaison Office at (202) 647-1076 or the employee can check the FLO SharePoint (Intranet) website at:

[http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/CommunityLiaisonOffice/Pages/CommunityLiaisonOverseas.aspx](http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/CommunityLiaisonOffice/Pages/CommunityLiaisonOverseas.aspx)

**Predecessor**

Another source of information is your predecessor. You may wish to write one of your first e-mails to him/her.