

## Correspondence Preparation Notes

1. Letterhead: Be sure the letterhead is appropriate for the signer.
2. Never use "justified" margins especially when for signature of either Dr. Knipling or Dr. Rexroad.
3. Always use title (Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms.) on letters.
4. Do not abbreviate State name in the inside address. Always show the zip code in the address.
5. Do not use titles on the TO: line in memos (TO: Dr. John Doe – not acceptable).
6. Double space the body of letters of one paragraph, 10 lines or less. Single space the body of letters longer than one paragraph.
7. Acronyms: the first time referring to a word to be abbreviated, write it out with the acronym following in parentheses. For example: Agricultural Research Service (ARS); fiscal year (FY). [Notice: fiscal year is NOT capitalized]. That is correct!
8. Federal Government – always capitalized.
9. State is capitalized when referring to States in the United States (State of Maryland; State, Federal, local). Do NOT capitalize when used in a general sense (state of mind; a foreign state).
10. Dates – a comma is needed after the year when you have the complete date in a sentence (In your letter dated October 15, 1982, you requested information...). When only month and year are used in a sentence, NO commas are used (April 2003).
11. Agency is capitalized when referring to our Agency (ARS). When referring to other agencies, put in lower case.
12. ARS' (not ARS's) when showing possession. T&As NOT T&A's.
13. We do NOT use "the Department" in outgoing correspondence. The USDA acronym is to be used.
14. Comma (,) before "and" when there is a series of three (time, money, and measurement).

15. Keep time together on same line – 12:15 p.m., not 12:15 p.m.
16. "Web-site" is hyphenated, not "website".
17. "E-mail" is hyphenated, not "email".
18. "Agencywide" is one word, not "Agency wide".
19. Try to avoid typing part of a personal name at the end of a sentence. If you must divide the name, title, first name, and middle initial should be on the same line.
20. Always include a legend line on the file copies.
21. On the yellow file copy that is returning at the originating office, please have the author initial and date near the legend line, as well as cleared by appropriate level of authority within office.
22. If document is returned for corrections, **always** include the old yellow file copy – no matter how many times it has been returned for corrections. Always add another legend line with current information.

Example:

ARS:OA:CLonaberger:lg:720-3656:4/9/03:h/bebest.wpd

Rewritten:third paragraph

ARS:OA:CLonaberger:lg:720-3656:4/12/03:h/bebest.wpd

23. We are the Agricultural Research Service, NOT the Agriculture Research Service.
24. Period and other punctuation goes inside quotation marks. For example:  
David was walking down the street and said, "I am tired."