

Letter Types

There are 4 types of letter that a player may receive

- Job Offer - These are quest offers, and will tell the player what tasks are required to complete the quest. In order to complete the quest, the player must respond to the mail with the appropriate items attached.
- Anecdote - These are fun letters that offer humorous anecdotes, and serve no purpose but to entertain the player and remind them of a close relationship with one of the NPCs in their town.
- Gift - These are other reminder letters, where instead of offering humor, the NPC offers a physical item. An anecdote can be included, but these letters are about the gift.
- Response - These letters are replies to other mail or to in-person conversations. They can offer expanded information about a discussed topic, a simple thank you for the conversation, or any number of other types of response. Their emotional range will be the most varied.

Emotional State

There are 5 emotional tones in which a letter may be written

- Pleasant
- Annoyed
- Excited
- Sad
- Angry

Emotional ranges may change over the course of a letter, transitioning from Pleasant to Angry, Sad to Excited, or any other combination. It should never be more than two emotions in a single letter, for the sake of legibility.

Formality

There is a sliding scale of relationship familiarity that can be represented

- Formal
- Casual
- Friendly
- Romantic

As you get to know an NPC, they will begin somewhere between Formal and Casual, and will advance towards Friendly and even Romantic in certain circumstances. Angry letters will tend more towards Formal, while Excited letters will tend more towards Romantic. For example, if Formal is represented at value 0 and Romantic is represented at value 100, a character's personal relationship value may be at 45, but if they're angry, the letter will deduct 10 points, setting the letter at a formality of 35. Which may be enough to change the overall letter's tone from Friendly to Casual, meaning that a different pool of text options will be chosen.

Letter Formatting

Procedurally-generated letters in this game will follow this formatting:

[Header]

[Purpose Of Mail]. [Elaboration]. [Call To Action]. [Sign Off].

[Footer], [Name]

Headers and Footers will be determined by NPC personality and personal relationship with the player.

The middle line in the above sample represents the body of the letter. Purpose of Mail, Elaboration, Call to Action, and Sign Off are all parts of a letter's body and will be entire sentences unto themselves, populated by different rules depending on letter type.

No matter the procedural generation techniques used, the letters will always be presented in this order for the sake of ease for the player. Purpose of Mail informs impatient players if they should bother reading the contents, which is followed immediately by an explanation. The call to action is a mention of what the player can do about the knowledge gained by reading this letter, and is where the terms of a quest offer will be presented. The Sign Off is simply the character's way of saying goodbye. Call To Action and Sign Off can be skipped based on the rest of the letter and the player-character relationship, but Purpose and Elaboration are mandatory for all letters.

Purposes, Elaborations, Calls to Action, and Sign offs will be associated with a series of tags that will define which pool of sentences they will belong to, and the letter generator will search for these tags to find appropriate sentences for its needs.

As an example, here is a sentence that will fit into the Purpose of Mail part of the letter:

"I've got a job, and you're still my best option right now."

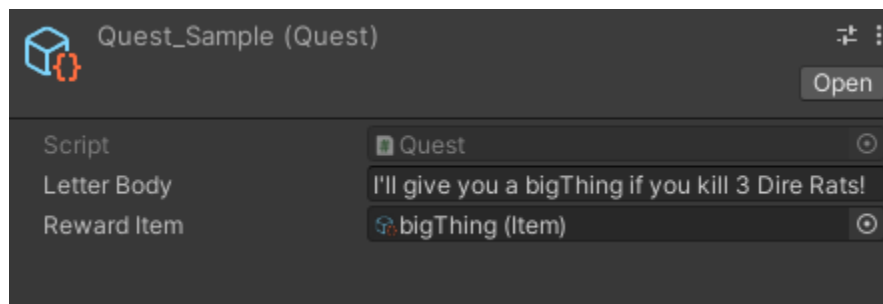
This sentence will be tagged as a Job Offer. This sentence will also be tagged as "angry" because of its hostile tone. It will also be tagged as having a formality level of "friendly" due to its casual tone.

There will be other sentence samples for if the character is angry but has a more formal relationship, or if the character has a romantic interest in the player. Each of these tags can be searched for or excluded in order to find the appropriate sentences within a json file.

Two letter types will require specific rules for their implementation, Job Offers and Responses.

Job Offers

Job Offer letters are associated with in-game quests and must reference in-game items. The main Elaboration text for these will be held in a quest gameObject, which can be edited alongside the various settings and values specific to that quest, as a way to keep all of that data organized in one place.



These will be hand-written text specific to the quest, rather than trying to generate text suitable for each possible quest. Keep in mind that even though this section of the letter is hand-written for the quest, the other parts of the letter will still be generated based on the character and their relationship with the player. As such, quest letters should be written in a somewhat generic way, that could at least plausibly work against many tones. Obviously no solution here will be perfect, but just try to keep this in mind while writing.

Response

Response letters will need more granularity of formatting in order to function. This is a TBD section that will require design input from Josh E and may prevent localization.

Letter Samples

[Header]

[Purpose Of Mail]. [Elaboration]. [Call To Action]. [Sign Off].

[Footer], [Name]

Pleasant, Casual Job Offer Letter:

[Dear Person,]

[I've got a job offer for you.] [Could I convince you to deliver me 15 carrots?] [Feel free to send them attached to your response, and I'll respond with a 25g payment directly to your account.]

[Looking forward to doing business with you!]

[Sincerely,] [Farmer MacCreary]

Pleasant, Friendly Anecdote Letter:

Dear Friend,

I hope you don't mind a story. I don't know about you, but I love the taste of gardening. When you get the little bits of mud in your mouth and you... probably don't do this, do you...? Anyway, talk to you later!

Sincerely, Sum Enpicee

Angry, Formal Anecdote Letter:

To Whom It May Concern,

I feel I must tell you a story. I'm starting to see my boss's face in my cabbages, which is making a cabbage rampage ever-more-likely as time goes on. I hope you can understand.

Sincerely, Farmer MacCreary