



Professional Basic English

Lecture 6

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Grammar and style: summary

- Lecture 2: proper use of possessives, dots, commas, cases and number
 - Simple basic rules, some tricky special cases
- Lecture 3: style advice
 - E.g. use concrete language, keep related words together
- Lecture 4: common mistakes and misused words
 - No general rules: mostly just need to memorize
- Lecture 5: complete and incomplete sentences, transitions
 - Transition words for transitions between sentences, conjunctions for transitions between clauses
- More information and examples in the reference material!

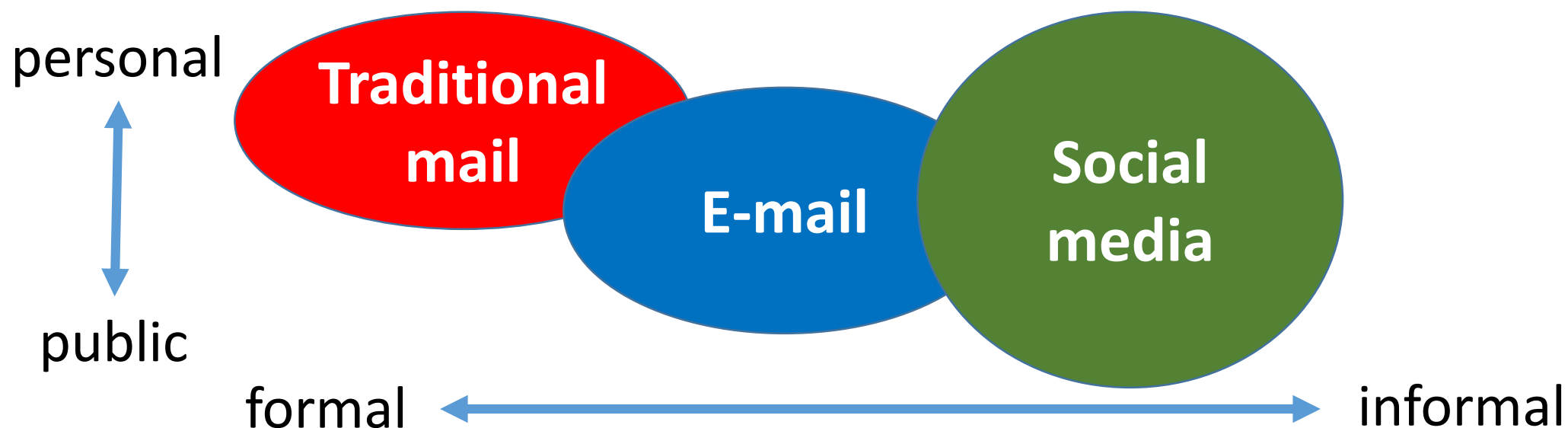


Writing correspondence

- Written correspondence is typically one-to-one communication
 - Can also be one-to-many (e.g. group e-mails, social media group messages)
 - Allow you to build and sustain relationship with colleagues
 - Demonstrates your character and abilities
- Includes for example letters, e-mails and memos
 - E-mail is the main media for professional communications
 - More and more (even professional) communication in social media (WeChat, Twitter, LinkedIn, ...)

Media for correspondence

- For the proper expression, you need to consider the reader (the audience) as well as the media
 - Traditional letters more formal than e-mail, e-mail more formal than social apps



Finding the right tone

- E-mails, memos and messages are often read very quickly
 - Use shorter paragraphs and expressions than in project reports or scientific papers
 - Find balance between being polite, yet straightforward and specific
- Personal vs professional communication
 - Personal messages informal, more like talking
 - Professional messages need to be considered more carefully



Source: <https://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/english-communication-for-scientists-14053993/writing-correspondence-14239296>



Organizing an e-mail

- Main parts: subject line, salutation (greeting), body, closing
- Subject line: should summarize the content
 - *“Hello”, “One question” or “Urgent”* are not very informative; subject lines like *“Meeting tomorrow”* or *“Question about the exam”* would be better
- Salutation: can be formal or informal, depending on the message and how well you know the person
 - *“Hi,” “Hey,” “Hi John,” “Hello John,” “Dear John,” “Dear Dr. [John] Smith,” “Dear Professor [Smith],” “Dear Sir,” “Dear Esteemed Sir”* etc.
- Body: the main part of the message
 - Structure depends on the topic and the recipient
- Closing: many more and less formal standard alternatives
 - *“Best regards,” “Thank you for your time/consideration,” “Sincerely”* etc.



Classroom task 1

- See the e-mail inbox below. In which order would you react to these e-mails?

Time	From	Subject	Message
2:43 pm	Carl Westman	Job application	Dear Mr. ...
2:21 pm	Tina Lake	New version of the report	John, here is
12:21 am	Mark Brown	Greetings!	Hello John,
12:01 am	NetMarket	Exclusive deal! 50% discounts	Great news!
11:37 am	admin	Your email will be closed today!	Warning! ...
9:51 am	Emily Smith	Dinner tonight?	Hi John, I ...



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Choosing the salutation

- When writing to a peer (fellow student or colleague you know well), salutation can be informal
 - E.g. *Hi Mark*, or just *Mark*, *could you [...]*
- When writing to a person you don't know or if you are new in the organization, salutation should be more formal
 - E.g. *Dear Prof. Smith* (overly polite expressions, like *Dear Esteemed Professor John Smith* may sound awkward rather than respectful in many cultures)
 - You can start using first name, if the recipient responds e.g. “*you can call me John*” or signs the e-mail with his/her first name (e.g. *Best regards, John*)
 - In some countries (e.g. Scandinavia) and organizations it is often acceptable to use the first name even if you don't know the person (however, if you don't know for sure, last name is of course a safer option)



Examples of standard closings

- Informal (use in personal messages or with close colleagues):
 - “*Cheers,*” “*See you,*” (or just “*CU*”), “*Best*” or “*BR*” (short for “*Best regards*”)
- More formal (standard closings in many organizations):
 - “*Regards,*” “*Best regards,*” “*Kind regards*”
- Formal correspondence:
 - “*Sincerely,*” “*Cordially*”
- Message dependent (examples):
 - “*Thank you for your time*” (e.g. for unsolicited job applications)
 - “*Looking forward to meet you*” (e.g. when agreeing an interview or meeting)
 - “*With many thanks*” (e.g. when receiving a favor or job offer)
 - “*With our condolences*” (e.g. when someone has died)



Writing to someone you don't know

- Start by introducing yourself
 - *I am Mark Brown, and I am graduating this spring in your field of research.*
 - *My name is Mark Brown and I am finishing my MSc in computer science at SZU.*
- It is good to explain how you know the person
 - *I heard your presentation at X, and my experience overlaps with your work [..]*
 - *I read your article about X, and found it very relevant for my research [..]*
 - *My colleague N.N suggested to contact you for [..]*
- If you are applying for a job or asking for a favor, the tone should not be too casual or demanding
 - *Do you have any openings in your lab?* (too direct)
 - *I was wondering if you are hiring more people in your lab?* (better)



Writing to someone you know

- For a close colleague, language can be rather informal and direct
 - *Hi John, could you help with [..] ?*
- For someone who is in higher position, the message must be specific
 - Managers etc. often receive a lot of e-mails and have little time to react to them
 - Clear and specific subject line and message: e.g. *“Problem with the server”*
 - Polite tone improves your chances to get a positive response
- Establish a context early in the message
 - Helps reader to remember previous discussions about the topic
 - *As we discussed last week about [..]*
 - *To follow up on yesterday’s conversation [..]*



Writing group e-mails

- Group e-mails addressed to several persons may include recipients you know, and recipients you don't know
 - Keep the tone neutral and respectful, even if some of the recipients are close colleagues
 - Do not make assumptions that everyone knows everything – summarize key issues to make sure everyone is on the same page



Classroom task 2

- Read the two e-mails shared in the WeChat group. Answer the following questions:
 - What kind of problems they have?
 - Which one do you think is better?
 - How would you change the e-mails to improve them?



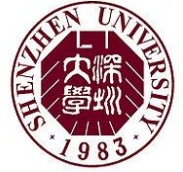
Classroom task 2: e-mail A

From: Egbert Buckworth;
To: Stan Leisures;
Subject: Application for summer internship

Dear Well Esteemed Sir Leisures,

I have been following closely your wonderful achievements as a founder and CEO of Lemon Computers, and I am highly impressed by the great usability and design of the new LemonPad3. I am Egbert Buckworth, a third year student in Computer Science at Neverheard University, with experience on several hobby projects using your amazing LemonStudio development environment. I am sorry for taking your valuable time, but I would like to request whether there could be any possibility for you to hire me for summer internship under your awesome supervision? I would very much hope to work in mobile application development, but if you do not need summer trainees at your software department, I could also work at the assembly line in any of your factories, make coffee or even water flowers in your office. I am a very flexible person. I am looking forward to receive your positive response!

With great respect,
Egbert Buckworth



Classroom task 2: e-mail B

From: Marc “Jack” Jackson
To: Stan Leisures
Subject: Internship

Hi Stan,

I am Marc Jackson, a third year student at Neverheard University, studying software development. I’m interested in applying for a summer internship at your company, but first I would like to ask how much salary I could expect? I have very good grades and I work very hard.

Cheers,
Jack



Classroom task 2: synthesis

From: Egbert Jackson
To: Stan Leisures
Subject: Internship application

Dear Mr. Leisures,

I am Egbert Jackson, a third year student at Neverheard University, studying software development, and I wish to apply for summer internship at Lemon Computers. I believe I would be a good choice for the position, since I have experience on several hobby projects using the LemonStudio development environment. I am looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Egbert Jackson



Managing e-mails

- Take your time to write an answer
 - Many times quickly written responses may sound impolite or leave important questions unanswered
 - If you don't have time to answer shortly, you can write a brief acknowledgement and ask for more time to reply
- Be patient when waiting for a reply
 - Do not send reminder before waiting a reasonable time
 - If e-mailing to abroad, take into account different time zones and local holiday seasons (e.g. Chinese New Year in China, Christmas in the West)
- For urgent or complicated issues, a phone call may be better option



Homework 2

- You work in a company and you are supposed to give a presentation tomorrow, but you are sick and you have to cancel it. Write two e-mails, one is a group e-mail to your colleagues and another one to your boss:
 - Explain your colleagues the situation and tell that you need to cancel the presentation
 - Ask your boss if it is possible to reschedule the presentation
- Submit your e-mails in BlackBoard, deadline 28 October



Summary

- Written correspondence is important for building and maintaining professional career and demonstrating your abilities
- The tone of your message should be considered carefully
 - Too informal and direct tone can be taken unprofessional or even as insult
 - Too formal and begging tone can feel uncomfortable and awkward to the recipient and probably won't make positive impression either
 - However, there are different cultures of communication in different countries and organizations; people are usually rather understanding for those differences
- Source for this lecture: <https://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/english-communication-for-scientists-14053993/writing-correspondence-14239296>