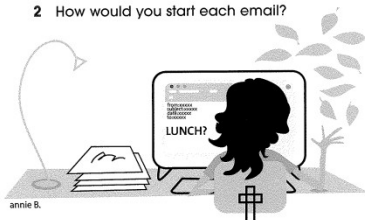


How to write a formal email

In this lesson you will practise different expressions to use in a formal email.

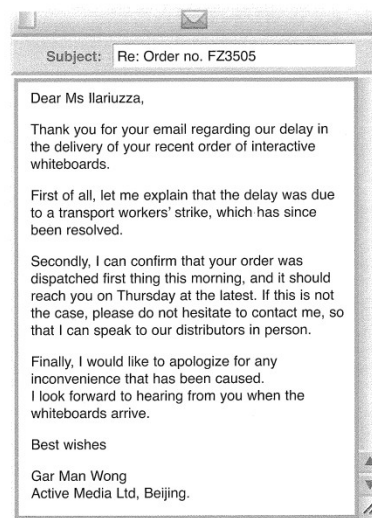
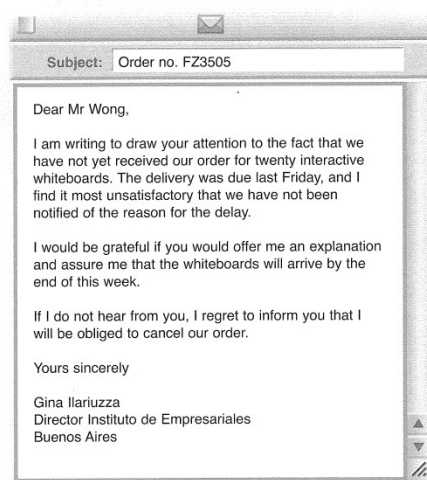
Starter

- 1 Would you write a formal or an informal email in the following situations?
 - 1 Agreeing to meet a colleague for lunch.
 - 2 Complaining to a supplier about a mistake in an order.
 - 3 Requesting information from an official website.
 - 4 Attaching the agenda for a meeting in an email to a colleague abroad.
 - 5 Apologizing for a delay in delivery to a customer.
 - 6 Sending your boss a report.
- 2 How would you start each email?



Expressions

- 1 Read the emails below and explain why the writers use a formal style.



Hint

We use the word **due** to say when we expect something to happen:
The delivery was due on 16th June.
We also use **due** to explain the reason why something happened:
The delay was due to industrial action.

- 2 Read the emails again and write the formal equivalent next to these informal expressions.

1 Please get in touch.

2 I'm not happy.

3 Thanks for your email about ...

4 Please ...

5 I'm sorry for any problems.

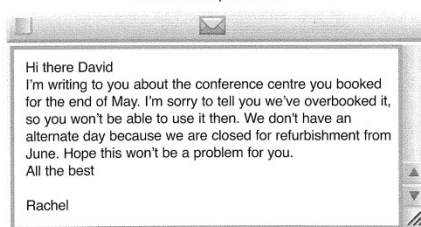
6 We sent your order ...

7 I'm sorry to tell you ...

8 I'm writing to let you know ...

Practice

- 1 Using the language in Expressions and in the Language box, write this email in a more appropriate style. Invent any extra information you need.



- 2 Now telephone Rachel in response to her email. Your teacher will be Rachel.

Language box

Formal emails have a number of features which are not present in more friendly emails. Firstly, the vocabulary is more formal:

I am afraid I will not be able to attend the meeting on Friday.
Not I'm sorry I can't make the meeting on Friday.

We tend to use fewer phrasal verbs:

If any problems arise ...
Not ... problems come up ...
We will test the prototype ...
Not ... try-out the prototype ...
They may eventually sell ...
Not ... end-up-selling ...

The phrases are often longer and more complicated:

We will not transfer the amount on the invoice until we have received our complete order in perfect condition, however long that may take.

We normally do not contract the verb forms:

I am writing to inform you that I will not be in the office on Monday as I have a doctor's appointment.
Not I'm writing to tell you I won't be in on Monday because I'm going to the doctor's.

We often use the passive:

Your invoice will be sent next week.
I was told we would receive a 10% discount.

Look

Look again at the two emails in Expressions and underline all the features of formal emails.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

1

2

3

3 useful phrases from this lesson

1


2

3

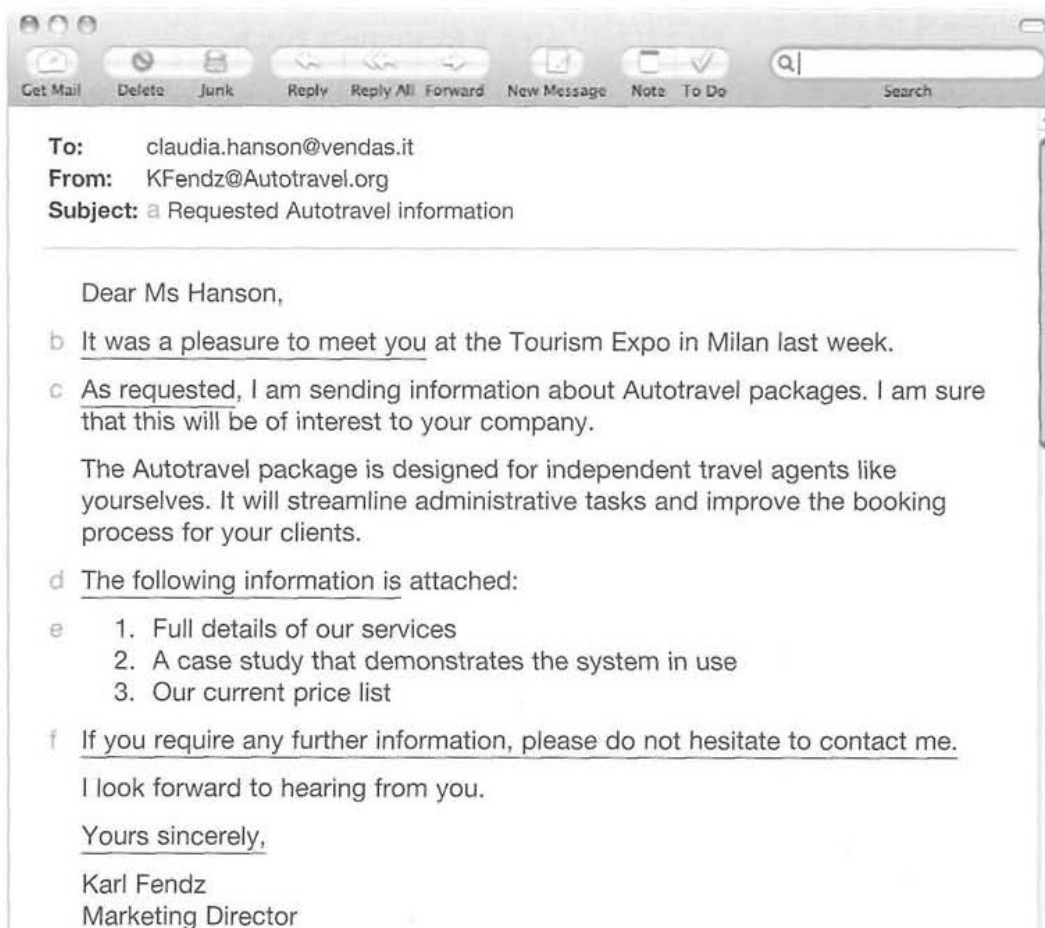
Things to remember

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

| What do you write? 1

 The tone of a formal email is similar to a business letter. However, as with all emails, the information should be concise. Match the functions 1–6 to the parts of the email a–f.

- 1 Bullet point or list information
- 2 Offer further assistance
- 3 State when you made contact
- 4 Say why you are writing
- 5 Insert clear subject sentence
- 6 Clarify any attachments




2 Replace the underlined words in the email in exercise 1 with one of the phrases below.

- 1 As you expressed an interest in our services
- 2 Kind regards,
- 3 Following our conversation
- 4 Please find
- 5 Do let me know if you have any queries.

What do you think?

Every day we send and receive emails. Some are informal emails to friends or colleagues, others might be more formal emails to potential customers or suppliers. Match the content 1–6 with the examples a–f. Can you think of more examples? Which of these should you avoid in a formal email?

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1 Abbreviations | a Yours sincerely, / Regards, |
| 2 Salutation | b Here's some blue sky thinking for you. |
| 3 Contractions | c  |
| 4 Jargon | d I'm writing to see if you've ... |
| 5 A formal ending | e FYI (for your information) |
| 6 Emoticons | f Dear Mr Webb |