

Week 9 How to Write Emails

Adapted from <https://www.english-at-home.com/business/how-to-write-an-email/>

Emails are generally shorter than letters. As they are often written quickly, in response to a request or question, they may contain only a few lines. Informal English, abbreviations, and absence of standard salutations are common when you write an email.

Email Structure

Emails may contain the following elements:

- Subject line

This shows the reader the exact subject of the email.

- (Salutation)

This is optional. Some people start with “Hi”, others with the first name of the reader, or others with no name or salutation at all.

- Reason for writing

- Main point

- (Closing)

There are a variety of closing phrases, such as “Cheers” or “Thanks”. These are also optional.

How To Write An Email – General Tips

1. Use a descriptive subject line.

Say what the email is about in a few words. Instead of writing “Urgent”, write “Meeting at 10am about pay rise”, for example.

Use a subject line each time you reply to an email, to avoid subject lines starting “Re:”

Be careful to avoid writing general subject lines, such as “Hello” or “Hi”, as some email providers automatically delete these as spam.

2. Keep your emails short.

Try to keep to only one point in each email. If necessary, you can send more emails on different points. If you write a descriptive subject line for each email, it’s easier for your reader to understand the content of your email.

You don't need to quote all the previous messages in the one you send. You can selectively quote (only including the previous question, for example) by using the angle brackets << quote here >>.

3. Write simple, direct English.

This is especially important if you're writing to someone whose first language is not English.

Here are some ways of writing simple English:

- use active forms instead of passive forms
- write short sentences rather than long ones (if in doubt, stick to a simple “who did what to who, how, where and when” type word order)
- don't use idioms
- use common words rather than technical or jargon words if your reader is not in the same field as you

4. Make sure your reader knows what to do next.

Help your reader act on your email. For example, if you want your reader to find some information for you, write “Please can you find me the sales figures for 2018” instead of a less direct “I'm going to need the sales figures for 2018”.

5. Reduce the amount of email you send.

Most people receive more (rather than less) email every day. Here are some ways you can reduce the number of emails you send to people:

- make a phone call rather than write an email. This is particularly effective if you only want a quick piece of information
- only write an email to the people who need to see it. Don't automatically click “reply to all” if only one or two people need to read your message.
- don't take part in chain emails (when you have to forward something on to five of your best friends, for example)
- don't reply to spam

6. Don't send heavy attachments.

If possible, send a zip file, or give web addresses where your reader can find information.

7. Be careful what you write in your email.

Try to make your emails informative and polite, and use a neutral tone. Remember that your reader could forward your email to other people, so only write what you would be happy for other people to read. (No gossip, no personal comments, no confidential information and no ambiguous English such as sarcastic humour.)

Avoid using emoticons and smilies in business emails, or too many exclamation marks.

8. Check your email before you send it.

Use a spell check to eliminate spelling mistakes. Read your email aloud to check for grammar and punctuation errors. Ask yourself these questions:

“Is this clear?”

“Does my reader know what to do next?”
“Is this polite?”

Samples For Writing Emails – Greetings

There are a number of ways to start the email. In many cases, you can copy the sender and use the same greeting, but if you are the one to write first, here are some possible greetings.

– Friends and colleagues

“Hi” is informal, and you can use it for friends and colleagues.

You can also use “Hello” or “Hello + first name” if you know the person well.

– For acquaintances

Use “Dear Mr Jones” / “Dear Ms Jones” if you know the name of the person. Like with letters, use **Ms** instead of Miss or Mrs when you write to women.

– Formal emails

If you don’t know the name of the person, you can write “**Dear Sir**”, “**Dear Madam**” or “**Dear Sir / Madam**”.

– Writing to a group of people

If you are writing to a group of people, you could use a collective noun:

“Dear customers”, “Dear partners”.

If you are writing to a group of people who work in the same company or department, you could write “Dear All”, “Dear colleagues”, or “Hello everyone”.

– Writing to a group of bosses in your company

Here you could write “Dear Managers”, “Dear Directors” or “Dear Board members”.

– No greeting

Often in companies, you write quick emails to colleagues. Using email in this way is almost like using the telephone. In these situations, you don’t need to write any greeting or name, but just start the message.

Starting Your Email

Your first sentence should tell the reader what your email is about. Here are four of the most common reasons for writing an email, along with some sentences you can use to start:

1. Replying to a previous email

"Thanks for the information."

"Thanks for your phone call."

"Thanks for getting me the figures."

2. Giving brief updates

"Just a quick note to tell you..."

"Just a quick note to let you know..."

"Just to update you on..."

3. Referring to an attachment

"Take a look at the attached file."

"Have a quick look at the file I've attached about..."

"Thought you might find the attached interesting."

4. Changing plans

"Sorry, but I can't make the meeting tomorrow."

"Sorry, but I won't be able to meet you next week."

"Sorry, but something has come up and I can't meet you for lunch."

Your first sentence should only have one theme. For example, your reason for writing may be to ask for help, or to share some information, or to ask a question. Your first sentence for these different situations could be:

"Have you got a few minutes to help me with...?"

"Just wanted to let you know..."

"Regarding X, can you tell me if...?"

If you have more than one reason for writing, give each reason its own paragraph. It doesn't matter if your paragraph is only one line long. In fact, the extra space helps your reader to understand you have more than one reason for writing, and that each reason is different from the other.

Sample Email Writing

Hi Jo

Just wanted to let you know we got the project! They're signing tomorrow, so we should be starting the planning next week.

Regarding your presentation to them last year, do you still have the Powerpoint files?

Thanks

Adapted from <http://english.teamdev.com/resources/useful-phrases>

USEFUL PHRASES FOR EMAILS

Greetings

- Dear Sir/Madam, (very formal)
- Dear [Name],
- Hello [Name],
- Hi [Name],
- Hi Team, (if you're writing to the whole team)
- Good morning [Name],
- Good afternoon [Name],

Starting

- I recently read/heard about . . . and would like to know . . .
- I would be interested in (obtaining/receiving) ...
- I received your address from ... and would like to ...
- Thank you for taking the time to [write to us/give us some feedback etc — something the customer has done for us]
- Thank you for your email on [date].
- It's [Your Name] from [Your Company]. (e.g. It's Mary here from TeamDev.)
- Congratulations on [achievement if you know it]!
- Hope you're having a great [day of the week]!
- Hope you're feeling great!

Explaining Why You're Writing

- I wanted to tell you that...
- I am writing to tell you about ...
- I'm writing to tell you that...
- This email is to confirm that... (e.g. This email is to confirm that we've received your payment.)
- We're sending you this email because...
- In this email we wanted to [tell you about/give you...]
- We are writing to [why you're writing]
- We wish to inform you of [news] (e.g. We wish to inform you of a change in our rates.)
- I'm writing concerning/with regard to/about ...
- Just a short email + [to inform you that/ to confirm/ to request...]
- I'm writing just so you know ...
- I'm writing to remind you about...
- I'm writing to let you know that...
- This email is just to let you know that...
- Just a quick reminder that...
- I would like to [action]. (e.g. I would like to inform you that...)
- This is just to let you know that...
- Wanted to give you a friendly reminder that...
- I am contacting you for the following reason.
- Just a quick email to [purpose] (e.g. Just a quick email to see how you're doing.)
- I just wanted to let you know that...

Reconnecting with Old Customers

- So happy we reconnected after this time.
- So glad that we're in touch again.
- Can't believe it's been [period of time] since we last spoke! Feels like yesterday.
- Glad you're back in our life!
- Glad to see our old friends again!
- It's always nice to get in touch with old friends!
- Long time no see! Glad to hear from you again.

Introducing Value

- I highly recommend (doing smth, e.g. visiting our new Knowledge Base/checking out this new article)
- Here is a copy of the information...
- [value] will help your team [do something] (E.g. This library will help your team create websites much faster)
- To get the most out of [Product], [what you want them to do, e.g. don't forget to take a look at the Start Guide]
- In this email, we wanted to give you a few links to articles that we've written that will help you get up to speed on how to use some of our best features.
- We brought together some of the best tutorials which...
- What's new since you left? Lots. Starting with...
- We're confident you'll see big improvements since ...
- We know you're busy but we'd hate to see you miss out on this opportunity!
- You can do so much with...
- Learn how to...
- Here's how to... [action which is important to the user]
- We thought you might find this useful.

Referring to Previous Contact

- Thank you for your letter of March 15 ...
- Thank you for contacting us.
- In reply to your request ...
- Thank you for your letter regarding ...
- With reference to our telephone conversation yesterday ...
- Further to our meeting last week ...
- I would just like to confirm the main points we discussed on Tuesday.
- Further to your email on [date], ...
- I'm writing in reply to your email on [date] about [topic].
- In reply to your email ...
- I saw your advertisement on [website].
- We understand from your email that you're interested in (product/service/feature).
- We talked last week about...
- We had a phone call on [Date] about...

- It was nice to hear from you yesterday.
- I was glad to catch up yesterday.

Making a Request

- We would appreciate it if you would ...
- I would be grateful if you could...
- Could you possibly tell us/let us have...
- In addition, I would like to receive ...
- It would be helpful if you could send us ...
- I am interested in (obtaining/receiving...)
- I would appreciate your attention to this matter.
- Please let me know what action you propose to take.
- I would be grateful if you could send me further information about...
- Shall I [verb]? (e.g. Shall I meet you at the airport?)
- Would it be possible to...? (e.g. Would it be possible to have a quick chat on Monday?)
- Would you mind if [+ past simple]? (e.g. Would you mind if I took the day off on Tuesday?)
- I was hoping you could [do something].
- What would you like to do next?
- Could you please send me ... ?
- Let's discuss your next step.
- Could you please [what you want the person to do]?
- It would be great if you could...
- Would you mind [doing something]? (e.g. Would you mind having a quick chat?)
- I was wondering if you could...
- Could you confirm these details?
- Would you like me to ... (e.g. Would you like me to send you a link to the article?)
- Just wondered if (you could send me a copy/there is any news etc)

Email Body

- Here are the details on...
- Furthermore...
- In addition, I would like to...
- In spite of/Despite [something] (e.g. We're glad the issues got sorted out in spite of the delay.)
- For example/For instance, ...

- In other words, ...
- In order to [do something], we would need to [do something else]. (e.g. In order to fix this bug, we would need to research it a bit further.)
- That's why ...
- Would [time] would work for you?
- I'm pleased to hear that...
- First of all, ...
- Firstly/Secondly...

Talking about Problems and Solutions

- There seems to be a problem with the new feature.
- Issue number 35402 has been resolved.
- Here are the possible solutions:
- We could [solution 1], or we could [solution 2]. (e.g. We could add a new button or we could redesign the whole dialog.)
- While running the tests, we've discovered that [something] is not working properly.
- Which option would you like us to work on?
- What would you like us to do about [problem]?
- The [page, feature, button] is not working the way it should.
- The first solution will take about 3 days, and the second one can take up to 10 days.
- If we implement the first solution, we can have [possible problems] in the future.
- However, the second solution will take much longer, and we cannot give even a rough estimate at the moment.
- We'd like to research this problem a bit more in order to give you a more detailed list of options.
- What would you like to go with?
- Which solution works best for you?
- We've found a bug in [where].
- Here's how we would like to take care of this issue.
- How would you like us to solve this issue?
- When we click on the [button], we should see [result]. However, now [problem]. (e.g. When we click on the Create button, we should see a new page. However, now it shows an Error message.)
- We can see three options.
- There are two ways to solve this.
- We've taken care of bug [name].
- We've come up with a workaround for this issue.
- This solution is better, but it will take longer to implement.

- If we go with the first option, we might run into some problems with [topic] in the future.

Asking for Clarifications

- Could you please clarify what you would like us to do about [problem]?
- If I understood you correctly, you would like us to...
- What exactly do you mean by [word]?
- Did I hear you correctly when you said that [repeat what you think he/she said]?
- Could you please clarify when you would like us to finish this?
- When exactly are you expecting to have this feature?
- Could you explain what you mean by [word]?
- In other words, would you like us to...?
- I didn't quite get your point about [topic]. Could you be more specific?
- Could you repeat what you said about [topic]?
- Could you give us some more details on the [topic]?

Asking Questions

- When would it be convenient for you to ... ?
- Have you given any additional consideration to [topic]?
- Which option would work best for you?
- What would you like us to do next?
- Would you like to...?
- Would you prefer to...?
- Would you rather ... or ...?
- How would you feel about ...?
- What do you feel is the next step?
- Is it possible to...?
- Could you [do something]? (e.g. Could you check it please?)

Call to Action

- Are you considering [action]? (e.g. Are you considering upgrading to the new version?)
- Just book time on my calendar and I can answer all your questions on the product and pricing.
- Or if you'd rather [alternative option], you can...
- Help us [give value to you] by [what action we want them to take]. (e.g. Help us give you the best advice by telling us a bit more about your project.)
- I'd love it if you could walk me through your project.
- This may be a great time to ... [call to action] (This may be a great time to take a look at our Knowledge Base)
- If you're interested, drop me a line and we can [action] (e.g. If you're interested, drop me a line and we can have a quick chat to discuss your further steps.)
- Come check out what's new and get inspired!

Asking Them to Contact Us

- Could you please keep us updated on this?
- You can reserve a free consultation here [link] or just give us a call at [number]
- If you have any questions, please email or call me.
- Please feel free to contact me anytime.
- If there's anything I can do for you, please let me know.
- You can reach me at [phone number] if there's anything you'd like to discuss.
- Feel free to call me.

Talking about Meetings

- At the meeting on Tuesday/yesterday, we discussed [topic].
- Let's discuss this at the meeting, if you don't mind.
- At our last meeting, we talked about [topic].

- At the meeting, we agreed to [do something].
- We'd like to have a meeting about [topic] on Thursday.
- Let's have a meeting sometime this week.
- How about talking this over at a meeting?
- Why don't we talk this over at a meeting?
- I'd be glad to tell you more about this at the meeting today.
- This issue came up at the meeting we had on Friday.
- Let's have a meeting to discuss this issue.
- I've set up a meeting for Friday at 5 p.m. Here's the link.

Offering Help

- We are quite willing to ... (e.g. We are quite willing to consider a discount.)
- Our company would be pleased to ... (e.g. Our company would be pleased to work with you.)
- If there's anything I can help you with, just let me know.
- We would be happy to ... (e.g. We would be happy to help.)
- Would you like us to ... ? (e.g. Would you like us to create a template for you?)

Thanking

- Thank you for your consideration.
- I appreciate that you [did something] (e.g. I appreciate that you took the time to give me these details.)
- Thank you for taking the time to [do something] (e.g. Thanks for taking the time to give us your feedback.)
- Thank you for [Verb-ing/noun] (e.g. Thank you for your email. Thank you for writing to us.)
- Thanks a lot for everything.
- Thank you for your time.
- Thank you very much for ...
- Many thanks for...
- You're so helpful.
- That's really thoughtful of you.
- I really appreciate your help.
- Thank you for your patience.
- It was really great of you to [do something].
- Thank you for clearing this up.
- Thank you for helping us in this matter.

Giving Good News

- We are pleased to announce that .../ to inform you that...
- We have some good news for you. [News].
- It is my pleasure to let you know that [news].
- I'm glad to tell you that...
- I just wanted to let you know that...
- You will be pleased to learn that .../ to hear that...

Giving Bad News

- We regret to inform you that ...
- I regret to inform you that due to a mistake in our database, ...
- Unfortunately, we cannot/we are unable to ...
- After careful consideration we have decided (not) to ...
- I'm afraid it would be impossible to [do something].
- Due to [reason], it would be impossible to [do something].
- It's against company policy to [do something].
- Despite my best efforts, it has proved to be impossible to...
- I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you.
- Unfortunately, [news]
- I'm afraid it would not be possible to ...
- Unfortunately, I have to tell you that...
- I'm afraid that we can't [do something].
- That's not really possible.
- I can't see any way to ...
- It's out of my hands. (means that there's nothing you can do about it, you don't have enough authority)
- I'm afraid I won't be able to...
- I'm sorry to tell you that...

Talking about Vacations and Holidays

- Unfortunately, [Name] is sick , so (s)he's not going to work today.
- I'm planning a vacation in June. Would that be all right with you?
- We have a national holiday in our country on [Date]. Therefore, our office will not be working on that date.
- I'm currently on vacation. If you have questions about [topic], please write to [Name] at [email address].
- Our company is celebrating [holiday] from [start date] until [finish date]. (e.g. Our company is celebrating Christmas and New Year from December 30 until January 4.)
- When would it be all right for me to have a week-long vacation?

- I'm going to be on vacation from [start date] until [finish date].
- [Name] and [Name] are going to have a day off on [Date].
- Today, [Name] is not feeling well, (s)he's not in the office.
- [Date] is a national holiday in our country, so we will not be working on this day.
- I'm on vacation now until [finish date]. I will read and answer all emails as soon as I get back. If this is urgent, please contact [Name] at [email address].

Apologizing

- We apologize for [what you're apologizing for].
- I wish to apologize for... (Verb-ing/noun)
- I regret any inconvenience caused by...
- I apologize for the problems you've had.
- Please accept my apologies.
- Sorry for any inconveniences this situation may have caused.
- I would like to apologize for (the delay/the inconvenience) ...
- Once again, I apologize for any inconveniences.
- We are sorry for the delay.
- I'd like to apologize for making you wait.
- Sorry to keep you waiting.
- I'm really sorry, but ...
- Sorry again for ...

Talking about Orders

- Thank you for your quotation of ...
- We are pleased to place an order with your company for ...
- We would like to cancel our order #...
- Please confirm that you've received our order.
- Your order will be processed as quickly as possible.
- It will take about [period of time] to process your order.
- We can guarantee delivery before ...
- I'd like to cancel the order I placed on [Date].
- I'd like to place an order for [product].
- Please confirm your order.
- We're processing your order and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.
- We've received your order #...
- Thank you for your order.
- Your order shouldn't take more than 2 days to arrive.
- Thank you for your order #...
- We're glad that you chose us to help you with this!

Attaching Documents

- I am enclosing (attaching) ...
- Please find enclosed (attached) ...
- You will find enclosed (attached)...
- I've attached the [file] for your review.
- The attached [file] contains ...
- Could you please sign the attached form and send it back to us by [date]?
- Here's the [file] we discussed.
- [File] is attached.
- Please take a look at the attached [file].
- Take a look at the [document] I've attached to this email.
- I've attached ...

Closing Remarks

- If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.
- For further details ...
- If you require more information ...
- Thank you for taking this into consideration.
- We hope you are happy with this arrangement.
- We look forward to a successful working relationship in the future.
- We would be (very) pleased to do business with your company.
- I would be happy to have an opportunity to work with your firm.
- I look forward to seeing you next week.
- Looking forward to hearing from you.
- I would appreciate your reply.
- I look forward to doing business with you in the future.
- I enjoyed working with you and look forward to...
- Thank you once more for your help in this matter.
- If you require any further information, please let me know.
- Looking forward to hearing from you,
- Let me know if you need any help.
- If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- If there's anything I can do to help you, just drop me a line.
- Do not hesitate to contact us again at [telephone number/email address] if there's anything we can help you with.
- Thank you for your help.
- I'd love to hear your feedback.
- Hope to hear from you soon.
- Thank you for your patience/time/cooperation.
- I'd appreciate your reply,
- Please let me know what you think.
- Thanks again,

- Thank you for taking your time,
- Happy holidays!

Ending Your Email

- Sincerely,
- Yours sincerely,
- Sincerely yours,
- Yours faithfully,
- Kind regards,
- Yours truly,
- Many thanks,
- Regards,
- Best regards,
- With best wishes,
- Best wishes,
- Best,
- All the best,
- Thanks,
- Have a great weekend!
- Have a wonderful day!
- Have a productive day!

NOTE:

Blue fonts = formal email expressions

Green fonts = more casual email expressions

- More **formal**. Use these phrases if you're writing to someone for the first time, if this is a formal organization or a very big company.
- Less formal, more **friendly**. Use these phrases if you're on friendly terms with the person you're writing to and this is not your first communication.