

## How to write a formal email

Greeting: Dear Sir/Madam / Mr Dobbins,

- impersonal structures (e.g. It is clear that / it is likely that / It is important to / It is possible that)
- distancing in questions and requests (e.g. 'I wondered if you were free this evening' instead of 'Are you free?', 'Could you help me for a moment?' instead of 'Help me')
- frequent use of passive voice
- non-colloquial English
- each paragraph develops one specific topic
- discourse markers (e.g. in addition, moreover, on the one hand/on the other hand, nevertheless)
- formal language
- avoid contractions when writing formal emails (I'm → I am, don't → do not)

Yours faithfully/Yours sincerely,  
Steven Hill (Name)

### 1. The salutation (when the name of the recipient is known)

*Dear **Mr** + LAST NAME*

*Dear **Mrs** + LAST NAME* (a title used before a married woman's family name)

*Dear **Miss** + LAST NAME* (used before the family name of a woman who is not married)

*Dear **Ms** + LAST NAME* (a title used before a woman's family name when you do not want to state whether she is married or not)

- after *Dear X*, put a comma or nothing at all

**The salutation (If we don't know the name of the person we are writing to):**

*Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Sir, Dear Madam, To Whom It May Concern*

(However, it is always better to find another salutation such as '*Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Sales Department, Dear Recruiting Department*'...)

**3. State your purpose (e.g. thank the recipient, giving information, attachments, asking for information, requests, inviting, accepting, rejecting, ...)**

Thank you for contacting the ... /Thank you for your interest in ...

Thank you for getting back to me

Thank you for your prompt reply

Thank you for your kind invitation

I am writing with regard to/regarding ...

I am writing to let you know ...

We are delighted to inform you ...

We regret to inform you ...

We would like to remind you that...

Please find attached ...

In attachment, you can find ...

I am sending you ... as a pdf file.

Could you confirm if ...

Do you have any details/update on ...

I would like to know if/when/how ...

I was wondering if you could ...

I would like to confirm ...

What time would be convenient for you?

I am afraid I will not be able to ...

I apologise for any inconvenience caused.

We would like to invite you ...

We would be very pleased if you could come ...

It sounds like a good idea, but ...

I am not so sure about ...

I think we should ...

#### 4. Add your closing remarks

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to **hearing** from you. (**look forward to + gerund**)

#### 5. End with a closing

Emails which begin with *Dear Sir or Madam*, usually finish *Yours faithfully*

Formal emails which begin with the person's name usually finish *Yours sincerely*

(With) kind regards

(With) best wishes

#### Here are some ways to make your language polite

There will be a delay. → I am afraid there will be a small delay.

There is a problem. → It seems we have a slight problem.

I disagree. → I think there may be an issue here.

We can't do that. → To be honest, I am not sure we can do that.

Let's cancel the project. → Perhaps we should think about ...

#### Discourse markers in writing

Sequence:

First (Firstly)

Second (Secondly)

Third (Thirdly)

Next

Finally

Adding another point:

In addition

Moreover

Furthermore

Also  
Apart from this  
Besides

Showing a contrast:

However  
Nevertheless  
Nonetheless  
On the one hand / On the other hand  
Yet  
Despite / In spite of  
While  
Whereas

Giving examples:

Such as  
For example  
For instance  
e.g.

Rephrasing:

In other words  
that is to say  
Namely

Showing a logical connection:

As a result  
Therefore  
So  
Thus  
Hence

New topic:

Regarding  
With regard to  
As for

Summary:

In conclusion  
To conclude  
To summarise

In summary  
Briefly

## References

Emmerson, P. (2013). *Email English*. Macmillan Education.

Swan, M. (2016). *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.