How to Write an Email in English: 18 Office-ready Email Writing Tips (With Sample Emails)

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If you're wondering how to write an email in English, you're definitely not alone.

Emails have been hugely important to the internet for decades.

MySpace came and went, Google overtook AskJeeves, Napster got shut down…

But email is here to stay.

It's still necessary to have an email address, and people send emails almost every day.

That's why being able to write a strong, clear email in English is a really important skill. It can help you get a job, make friends, get into a university and much more.

If it's your first time writing an email in English, check out this guide for beginners.

Then, continue reading this post for **useful tips about email writing and email culture** (dos and don'ts).
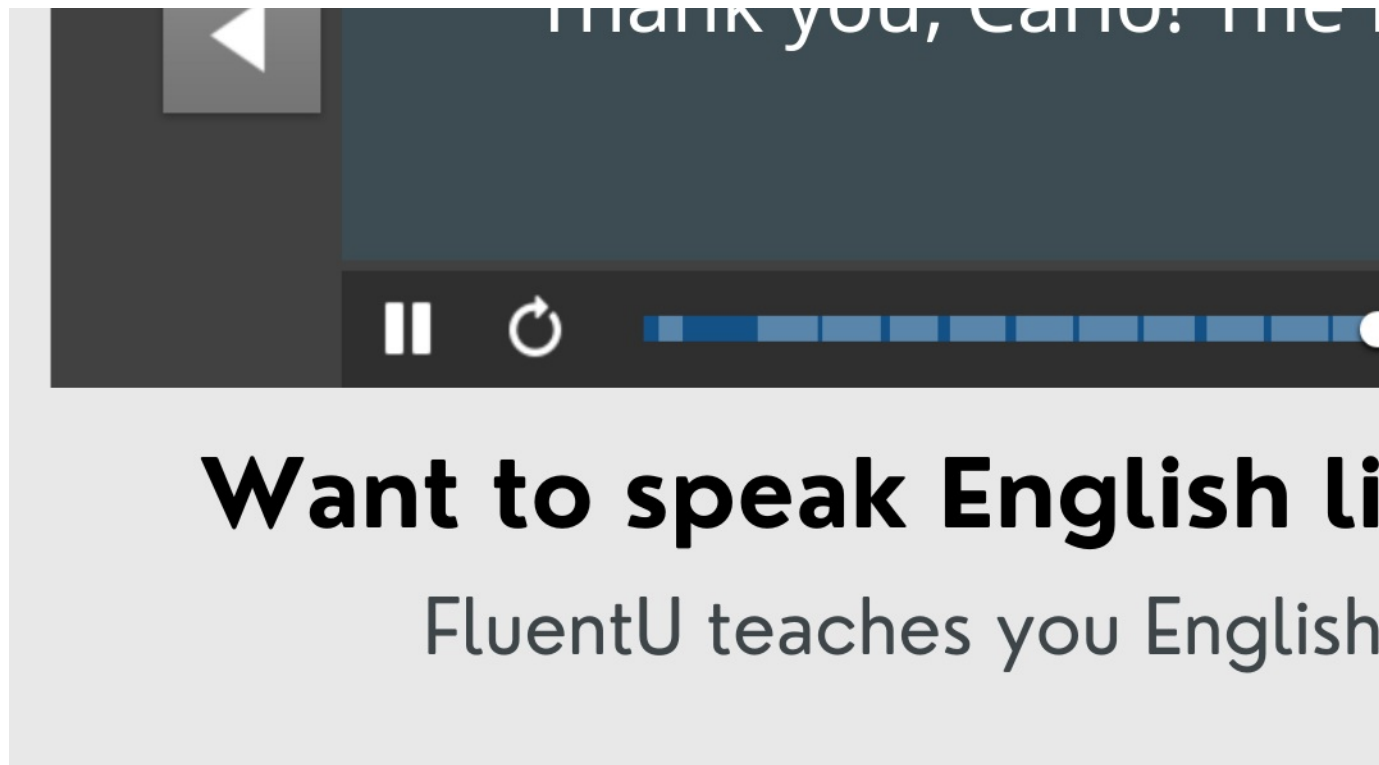
You'll get comfortable with the **format of email writing in English** and you'll see **full samples of different types of emails written in English**.

Ready? Let's start writing emails in English!

General Tips for How to Write an Email in English

1. Be sure an email is necessary

Like most of the email writing tips in this section, this may seem obvious. But sometimes we forget obvious things.

So ask yourself, "Is there a better or faster way to take care of this situation?" Many people get dozens or even hundreds of emails a day, so be sure that email is the fastest, clearest and most efficient way to communicate in your situation.

For example, if you're writing to a coworker or a friend that you often see, you can probably just talk to him or her in person. Or you could also send a text message or call on the phone.

If you've decided that an email is the best option, then check the following tips before you click "Send."

2. Use separate business and personal email addresses

This may not apply to everyone, but if you can do it, it can help you in many ways.

Many jobs automatically give you an email address that you have to use. If that's the case, then the problem is solved. Use the business email address for work and your personal email address for personal emails.

If you have a business email address, it can make an email look more professional. That's good if you're writing a formal email, but it might not be as nice if you're writing to a friend. So that's why having two can be useful.

Also, if you have separate accounts, it can help you balance your personal and professional life.

3. Be clear, brief and polite

Again, many people receive so many emails each day. If your email is confusing, angry or really long, the recipient may not respond right away. Eventually they may forget to answer or even just delete it.

So be sure to get to the point quickly, but not in a rude way.

Treat an email similarly to an essay, only much shorter, and you will probably have good results. In an essay, you have to introduce the topic, explain the different points and then conclude the topic.

Honestly, this is something I have difficulty doing myself. I'm not (usually) rude in email, but I do have problems with the "brief" part. So when I'm done writing an email, I check it and try to eliminate about 20% of the content, since it was probably unnecessary.

4. Don't write emails when you're angry

It can be very tempting to write a mean email when you're frustrated or angry at something. But it's not worth it.

If you're angry, wait until you've calmed down before writing your email. It's better to wait a day than to lose a job or destroy a friendship because you said something stupid when you were angry.

5. Use short sentences

Like #3, this is a problem that I have myself. I like to write long, complicated sentences, but often those are very confusing for the reader. That's especially true if the reader is not a native English speaker.

I teach English in Costa Rica, and in Spanish it seems to be more common to have really long sentences with many commas. That's very confusing, especially if you translate those ideas into English.

So here's a tip: Write short sentences. It's not bad style in English if you write short, clear sentences. Some authors, like Ernest Hemingway, are famous for doing it. (There's even an online tool called Hemingway App that can help you write more like him!)

If you're very comfortable writing in English, you can use long, more complicated sentences. But then again, if you're very comfortable writing in English, then you probably don't need these email writing tips!

If you want to be able to use longer sentences clearly and correctly, FluentU is a great resource for seeing different ways English sentences can be built.

FluentU takes real-world videos—like music videos, movie trailers, news and inspiring talks—and turns them into language learning experiences.

There are many different types of videos, as you can see here:
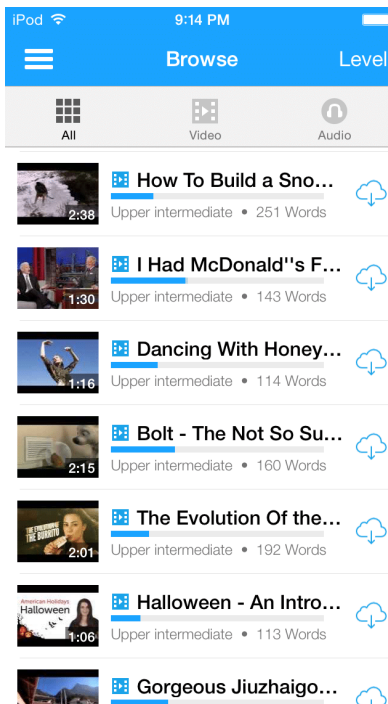
FluentU makes it easy to watch and understand native English videos with **interactive captions.** Tap or click on any word to see what it means, learn how to use it, hear it pronounced and more.

Well , a friend of mine ,
Steven Spielberg , told
me to look

For example, if you tap on the word "brought," then you see this:

Lego Simpsons - Springfield
Elementary Collapses   Add
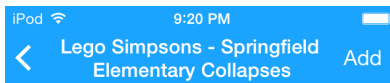
brought

v. to take something or
someone to another place

John brought a gift for her

I brought a pie for dessert

You can learn any video's vocabulary with FluentU's **fun quizzes.** Swipe left or right to see more examples for the word you're learning.
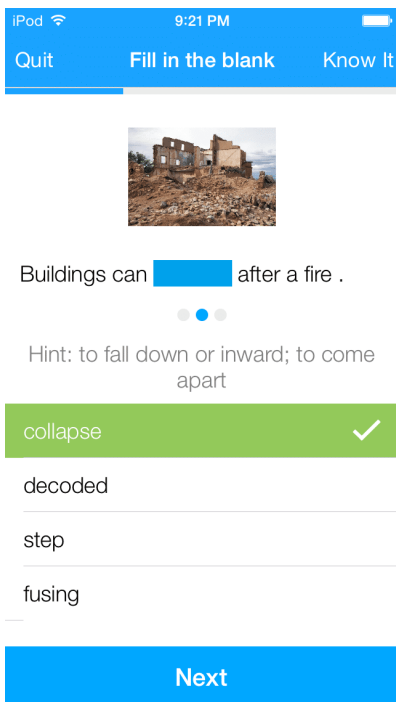
The videos are organized by genre and level, so it's super easy to find the ones that work for you. FluentU also keeps track of your learning, then suggests videos and examples perfect for you.

Start using FluentU on the website or download the FluentU app from the iTunes store or Google Play store.

6. Avoid forwarding emails and replying to all

The "Forward" option on email is a blessing (a good thing) and a curse (a bad thing). It can be good to quickly pass on important information to a new person. However, it can also be annoying for the recipient if it's not used correctly. (The same thing is true about the "Reply All" option.)

If you need to forward an email, check carefully what information you're forwarding. In some cases, it may be personal, confidential or just plain excessive (unnecessary). If so, cut those parts out.

Also, some email programs filter out emails marked with "Fwd" at the beginning of the subject line, and may even put them in the Spam filter or refuse to deliver them.

And if you click on "Reply All," look closely at all of the recipients who will receive your email. Some people may not need to see your message. It's frustrating to receive emails about subjects that aren't relevant to you.

7. Use a spell checker

Most email programs have this option, so make sure you use it before sending the email.

Or if your email program doesn't offer English spell checking, you can add an extension like **Grammarly** to your browser and use it anytime you're writing anything.

To get the most accurate version of Grammarly, you'll need to make sure you have **Grammarly Premium**, which highlights and offers corrections for more advanced English issues,

8. Watch out for signatures

Many people put "cool" or "funny" signatures at the bottom of emails. They often include contact information, like email addresses or phone numbers. That can be useful, but if your emails get forwarded (see #5), that information may get to people you don't know, or even people you wouldn't want to have that information.

Additionally, if you send multiple emails back and forth with another person, it may include your signature every time, and the email chain just gets longer and longer. So consider not including your signature in some emails.

Or if you do want an email signature, try to keep it simple, without including your personal information.

9. Have a native speaker proofread your email, if possible

If you know any native speakers or have friends who speak English very well, you may want to ask them to review your email before you send it. That's especially true if it's about something important.

If you're taking an English class, you might even be able to ask your teacher to review the email—just be sure to ask nicely and say "please"!

10. Read your email personally before sending it

It might not always be possible to find a native speaker to check your email. In those cases, it's still useful to read your email yourself. It can help your English, too.

Try to read the text of your email out loud. First of all, that will help you work on your pronunciation, which is always nice. Second, it can help you see and hear mistakes in grammar.

It also helps you understand how your email "flows." If it's too long or complicated to read out loud, then you should probably make it shorter and clearer.

11. Double-check email addresses for all recipients

As I mentioned before, I live in Costa Rica. People here often have the same last name as many other people. It's basically like "Smith" or "Johnson" in the U.S., but about 10 times worse.

I've even had multiple students *at the same time* who had the exact same first and last names. And I've mistakenly sent emails to people who had very similar names.

So just check those email addresses twice to be safe.

Tips for Writing Emails in English with a Strong Structure

After you've followed the general email writing tips in the previous section, you need to actually write the email. So how do you do that?

There's a specific structure and format of email writing in English, shown in the following tips.

12. Use the subject line

It's surprising how many people don't do this. Be specific in your subject line, as well.

For example, don't just write "Question." Instead, be more specific, like "Question About Schedule for Friday's Meeting." That way, the recipient will know immediately what your email is about, even before opening it.

13. Start with an appropriate greeting

It's most polite to begin with some type of greeting. If you know the person well and it's an informal email, you can just say "Hey [First Name]."

You can also use "Hi [First Name]" or "Hello [First Name]," to be a little less casual.

If you don't know the name of the person (like if you're writing to customer service), you can use "To Whom It May Concern."

Notice that after greetings, you should generally use a comma. According to many sites like _Business Writing_, you should use a comma after a greeting in personal emails and letters, and use a colon after a greeting in business or formal emails/letters.

But in reality, a comma will probably always be fine if you can't remember the rule.

14. Pay attention to punctuation

Start each sentence with a capital letter. Be sure to put periods or other appropriate punctuation at the end of each sentence.

It's a small detail, but it can really help to make a positive impression.

15. Consider where to put "small talk"

If you know the person you're writing an email to, you might want to include a bit of "small talk." That could be something like asking about the person's family, a mutual friend or an activity that you have in common. But where and how can you include this?

Personally, I actually prefer to include this information *after* the "business" part of an email. If I'm asking for a favor, I prefer to ask first, and then to make small talk after.

Other people or cultures may prefer to have the small talk first, so you may want to adjust it if you know the reader's personality well.

16. Start with the end in mind

As you write, focus on the purpose and the goal of your email. If you're asking a question, that should be the main focus of your email. If you need a favor, then it should be very clear what favor you need and exactly how the reader can help you.

Imagine you are the recipient: Would you understand immediately what you needed to do in response to the email?

17. Put spaces between paragraphs

If you don't do this, you'll end up with a giant block of text. Just hit the "Return/Enter" key twice between paragraphs. It's much easier to read and

less overwhelming.

18. Use an appropriate closing

You can find some examples below, but be sure that it's <u>a goodbye that's appropriate for the purpose of your email</u>. In other words, don't sign an email with "Love, Ryan" if you're writing to your boss.

Similarly, don't sign it "Sincerely, Ryan Sitzman" if you're writing to your grandma to thank her for the birthday present she gave you. (And definitely don't sign your emails as "Ryan Sitzman" if that's not your name! And if it is your name, let me know. I'd like to start a Ryan Sitzmans Club!)

Now, let's put all of these tips into practice!

Sample of Common Types of Emails in English

One note before we continue this guide on how to write an email in English: As I mentioned in the first section, if you're writing a very important email—for example, if you're applying to a university or you need to send condolences (express sympathy) after someone dies—then you should definitely ask a native speaker to read your email and help you.

Personal emails: Introducing yourself for the first time

Many people still write formal business emails, but these days there aren't as many reasons to write personal emails. A lot of our communication is through online chatting, apps, texts or other methods. But there are still some situations when an English student might need to write a personal email in English.

General rules for personal emails in English:

Politeness: You don't need to use formal language, but you do want to appear polite and friendly. Because of that, if you make any requests, be sure to make them polite.

Instead of saying "Write me back," for example, try something like "If you have a chance, I'd love to hear back from you," or even "Please write back when you have a chance."

Greetings: For greetings, it's common to use "Dear [First Name]."

Closings: To say goodbye, use something like "Thanks," "See you soon!" or even a brief sentence like "I'm really looking forward to meeting you in person." Be sure to write/type your name, even if it will be included in your signature.

Casualness: With these types of emails, you can probably include more jokes or informal comments. However, still be careful about the tone of your email, especially if you don't know the recipient well.

Example of a personal email:

For this example, let's imagine that you're going to travel to the U.S., Canada or another English-speaking country. When you get there, you'll stay with a host family. So the organization has matched you with a family and you need to introduce yourselves before you meet in person.

Here's what you might send:

Dear Smith Family,

Hello, my name is John. I received a confirmation letter from the exchange organization today. It said I'll be staying with you for two months later this year. I wanted to introduce myself so you can know a bit more about me.

I'm 18 years old. I like listening to rock music, playing basketball and reading comic books. I will graduate from high school later this year, and I hope to go to college next year. I've never traveled outside of my country, so meeting you and visiting your country will be an exciting, new experience for me!

I'd also like to know more about you, so if you have a chance, please write back at this email address. If you have any questions for me, I'd be happy to answer them.

Thanks again for agreeing to host me—I'm very excited to meet you in person!

John

Semi-formal emails: Writing to request an appointment or meeting

This is a very common type of email, especially if you're an English student. You may need to write to your teacher to request a meeting with him or her.

General rules for semi-formal emails in English:

Length: Again, keep it short. Especially when you're trying to find a time that works for many people, you may have to exchange a few emails. So make them short and clear.

Respect: Remember that you're requesting a favor from the recipient, so be respectful and not demanding.

Greetings: Use formal or semi-formal greetings. You can still use "Dear _____," but instead of including the recipient's first name, use their title (<u>Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Prof. etc.</u>) and last name.

Closings: Depending on the purpose, you can probably use a semi-formal goodbye, such as "Thanks," "Hope to hear from you soon" or "Thanks in advance." If it's someone you have talked to before in person, you can maybe use something less formal, like "Have a great weekend."

Clarity: If you're requesting a specific day, that day/date and time should be very clear. Try to give multiple options. That way, if your top choice doesn't work, your recipient has other dates/times to choose from.

Example of a semi-formal email:

Dear Professor Smith,

I really enjoyed your Introduction to Writing Course, and I was interested in continuing by taking the Advanced Writing Course next semester. I'd like to meet with you to ask a few questions about the course, and also to get more information about the scholarship for international students.

Would it be possible to meet with you at your office sometime next week? I'm available during your regular office hours on Monday and Wednesday (2-5 p.m.), but if you're busy on those days, I could also meet any time on Tuesday or on Friday afternoon. Please let me know what day and time would work best for you.

Thanks very much for your time and help!

John Johnson

Formal emails: Writing about a problem with a product

I have to write emails like this pretty often, unfortunately. I say "unfortunately" because it's frustrating to have a problem with a product. Dealing with a company's customer service representatives can be difficult at times. But a clear, polite email should help you resolve your problems faster.

General rules for formal emails in English:

Politeness: Once again, be very polite. Remember that if someone works in customer service, they probably receive many complaint emails every day. So have some patience and compassion. The other person is human, too.

Formality: Avoid making jokes, using slang words or saying things that seem informal.

Clarity: Be clear by including any relevant details.

Requests: State the result or response that you want or expect. This is also called <u>"actionable" writing</u>. For example, if your product broke, you may want to request a replacement or a refund. So state exactly what you are requesting.

Greetings: For greetings, a common phrase is "To Whom It May Concern," since you probably won't know the name of the person who will be receiving the email. But if you do know the name, you can use "Dear [Title] [Last Name]," like in the semi-formal email example.

If those seem *too* formal, you may want to try something like "Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening." It could make you seem friendly and make the recipient more receptive to your complaint or questions.

Closings: For goodbyes, a simple "Sincerely" is best. But if it's a less formal company or you've already interacted with them, you could also say some kind of thanks.

Samples: In addition to asking a native speaker to check your email, it's a good idea to search for templates or samples of the type of email you're writing. There are <u>many different examples on the internet</u>, and you can probably find ones that will help guide you in your situation.

Example of a formal email:

To Whom It May Concern,

I recently bought a toaster from your company, but unfortunately it appears that the heating element isn't working correctly.

For reference, the model number is TOS-577, and I bought it on May 1, 2016 at the Toaster Emporium in New York City. I returned the toaster to the store, but they said I should contact you because the model had been an "open-box" discontinued model. Because of that, they weren't able to offer a refund or exchange.

I can understand the Toaster Emporium's position, but the toaster shouldn't have broken so soon. It is still covered under your company's one-year warranty, so I would like to exchange the toaster for a working model. If that isn't possible I would like to receive a refund. Please let me know what steps I need to take for this to happen.

Thanks very much for your help with this situation.

Sincerely,
John Johnson

So, there you have it! If you keep these tips in mind while writing emails in English, you can become an email expert.

If you would like more guidance for how to write an email in English (or improving your English writing skills overall), go to Inklyo. This website has instructional courses and books all about English writing, and there are even special materials that can teach you how to write emails better than ever before.

Ryan Sitzman teaches English and sometimes German in Costa Rica. He is passionate about learning, coffee, traveling, languages, writing, photography, books and movies, but not necessarily in that order. You can learn more or connect with him through his website Sitzman ABC.

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