

M 5 Formal or informal? – Helpful phrases for emailing

Here is a list of some formal and informal expressions to help you when writing your emails.

Formal or informal style?

There are many verbs and phrases which need to be adapted¹ when writing a formal email. Here are some ideas for better ways of saying what you want. However, it is often difficult to decide in a second language whether a word or phrase is formal or informal, but remember that written business English tends to be more formal than spoken (business) English.



General expressions

Informal expression	Formal expression
Thanks	Thank you very much/Thank you
Great to see you again at ...!	It was good to see you at ...
Let's start off ...	Firstly/first ...
What about meeting ...?	Perhaps we could meet ...?
Don't forget to ...	Please remember to ...
Please give me a call.	Please contact me.
Let's fix a date.	We should make an appointment ² .
We need the delivery ³ now.	We require the delivery immediately.
You're wrong!	I am afraid you are mistaken ⁴ ./I am afraid ⁵ that is incorrect.
We've lots of ...	We have a great amount ⁶ of ...

Using formal and informal verbs

Informal verbs	Formal verbs
to say sorry	to apologise
to think about	to consider
to call so.	to contact so.
to tell so.	to inform so.
to like sth. better	to prefer sth.
to buy	to purchase
to get	to receive
to end	to terminate
to want	would like to

Vocabulary

1 **to adapt sth.:** etw. anpassen – 2 **appointment:** der Termin – 3 **delivery:** die Lieferung – 4 **to be mistaken:** sich irren – 5 **I'm afraid ...:** Leider ... – 6 **amount:** die Menge

Task 1: Complete the following sentences using the formal verbs from the table. Remember to use the correct tense.

- We would like to _____ you that the invoice must be paid by the end of the month.
- We _____ your letter yesterday.
- We would like to _____ 10 pieces, article no. 23516.
- John says he _____ writing a letter to writing an email.
- You can _____ me at the office any time after 10 a.m.
- Sally said she _____ give the presentation at the next meeting.
- We _____ for the delay. The flight will now take off at 14.15.

Task 2: Look at the following email which has been written in a very informal way. Can you re-write it?

The screenshot shows an email client window titled "Mail To:". The menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Actions, Tools, Accounts, Window, and Help. The toolbar contains icons for Send, Cancel, Address, Attach, Print, Copy, Paste, and Font settings. The email header shows:

From: bobby.white@metaltech.uk
 To: s.pearson@blackett.com
 Subject: Good discount¹?! ☺

The email body contains the following text:

Hello Sammy Pearson
 Great to see you again at the trade fair²!! J
 Sorry; I left in a rush³ but trains wait for no-one!
 What about sending me your new catalogue?
 Don't forget: We want to get a good discount from you!!
 Give me a ring on my mobile (0175-1642879) and we can chew it over.
 Thanks a million
 Cheers
 Bobby White

Vocabulary

1 **discount:** der Rabatt – 2 **trade fair:** die (Handels-)Messe – 3 **to be in a rush:** in Eile sein (ugs.)

M 6 The KISS principle – how to keep your emails simple

Learn how to keep your emails short and simple with the KISS principle.

The expression KISS (short for: Keep it short and simple) is a basic rule¹ when writing an email. Time is money and it is not only your time which you may be wasting, but also that of your customer or client.



For this reason it is important to keep your messages clear and brief². This might mean that instead of describing a number of points in just one email you might find it easier to write two emails each with a limited number of points. This could be relevant if the individual points are not connected, or if they relate to different departments.

Being brief does not mean you need to be impolite, but people often write too much in one email and some of the information gets overlooked. So explain the facts as simply as possible and keep to the point³.

Task 1: The following email (A) is far too long. Look at the shortened version (B) and discuss it. Decide if the second email contains all the necessary information or not. ((Email-Rahmen))

Dear Mr Sanders

Email A

① Thank you for your email of 17 June in which you explained about the damaged goods which we had sent to you on 16 June. I am referring to order no. DJ2938.

② As you mentioned some of the pots had broken spouts and some were chipped or cracked, so that you could not sell them and this is a great problem for you as you have orders from a number of customers already and they are obviously⁴ very dissatisfied⁵.

③ According to ⁶ your email you require replacements for these pots as soon as possible, but you did not say exactly which pots you mean. Do you mean the Grecian style ones or the Roman pots? Perhaps you could clarify⁷ this or send us a photo of the broken pots. There is obviously no point in sending them back to us, but we will, of course pay for the disposal⁸ of these, so we would need an invoice from you for this.

④ As soon as we have received the detailed information about the pots from you we will send you replacements providing⁹ they are currently¹⁰ in stock¹¹. If not, we will replace them as soon as we are able to.

⑤ Once again we would like to apologise for this, although we think it may be the fault¹² of the shipping company¹³ rather than our own and we will need to contact them about this, which is why we need the photos from you.

⑥ We look forward to receiving this information and hope that we will be able to satisfy your request as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely
Bill Watkinson

262 words

Vocabulary

1 **basic rule**: die Grundregel – 2 **brief**: kurz gefasst – 3 **to keep to the point**: bei der Sache bleiben – 4 **obvious**: offensichtlich – 5 **dissatisfied**: unzufrieden – 6 **according to**: gemäß – 7 **clarify sth.**: etw. erklären/klarstellen – 8 **disposal**: die Entsorgung – 9 **providing that**: vorausgesetzt, dass – 10 **currently**: derzeit, im Moment – 11 **in stock**: vorrätig – 12 **fault**: die Schuld, der Fehler – 13 **shipping company**: die Spedition

Dear Mr Sanders

Email B

- ① Thank you for your email about the damage to order no. DJ2938.
- ② We realise that the damage could be a problem for your business.
- ③ Please send us exact details of the damaged pots together with photos.
- ④ If you dispose of the broken pots, we will reimburse¹ you for the costs, so we will need an invoice for this.
- ⑤ As soon as we have the above information we will replace the pots.
- ⑥ Once again we would like to apologise and ask you kindly for the above information so that we can investigate² the matter further.

Yours sincerely

Bill Watkinson

93 words

Task 2: Simplify³ these sentences using the KISS principle.



- a) It was with very great pleasure that we received your email dated 16 March.

- b) It was really good to meet up with you again at the trade fair especially as we missed each other last year and had to catch up on all the details afterwards on the telephone.

- c) We would be very grateful if you could send us your latest catalogue and the prices together with details of cash and quantity discounts and delivery costs.

- d) I am attaching the minutes of the last meeting on 3 June which you were unable to attend⁵ and would be grateful if you could confirm that you have received them.

- e) If you have any questions please let me know so that I can answer in more detail and with explanations about them as soon as possible.

Vocabulary

1 to reimburse sth.: etw. erstatten – 2 to investigate sth.: etw. untersuchen – 3 to simplify sth.: etw. vereinfachen

M 7 Abbreviations in emails – a quiz

Do you know the abbreviations? Do the multiple choice quiz.



© Colourbox

Task: Tick the correct answer for the abbreviations.

1. K.I.S.S. <input type="radio"/> a) Keep it short and simple. <input type="radio"/> b) Keep important structures short. <input type="radio"/> c) Keep improving sentences and style.	2. ASAP <input type="radio"/> a) all solutions and possibilities <input type="radio"/> b) as soon as possible <input type="radio"/> c) all suitable and possible
3. p.m. <input type="radio"/> a) past morning <input type="radio"/> b) popular melodies <input type="radio"/> c) post meridiem (after noon)	4. e.g. <input type="radio"/> a) easy going <input type="radio"/> b) example given <input type="radio"/> c) early goal
5. i.e. <input type="radio"/> a) id est (that is) <input type="radio"/> b) I enclose <input type="radio"/> c) in envelope	6. enc <input type="radio"/> a) encased <input type="radio"/> b) encircled <input type="radio"/> c) enclosed
7. pp <input type="radio"/> a) per proxy/on behalf of someone <input type="radio"/> b) postponed <input type="radio"/> c) post paid	8. etc <input type="radio"/> a) always <input type="radio"/> b) ethnic <input type="radio"/> c) et cetera (and so on)
9. PTO <input type="radio"/> a) Please turn over. <input type="radio"/> b) Please target others. <input type="radio"/> c) Please take over.	10. PIN <input type="radio"/> a) personal identity name <input type="radio"/> b) private identification number <input type="radio"/> c) personal identification number
11. Re/Ref <input type="radio"/> a) Referendum <input type="radio"/> b) Refill your drink. <input type="radio"/> c) Reference	12. RSVP <input type="radio"/> a) Please don't let me wait. <input type="radio"/> b) Please reply. <input type="radio"/> c) Please come here.

M 9 Dear Ms Turner – practise writing business emails

Practise writing business emails. Use standard phrases for emails.

Task: Your boss has asked you to write two emails for her in English. She has given you these two sets of notes. Choose one of them and write the email. Do not forget the subject line.

Email 1

- order no. PF 492775
- sally-turner@phoneworld.com
- damaged goods – mobile phones
- extent of damage: 100 mobile phones delivered – 5 with cracked displays, 4 with scratched housing, 6 with red housing which should have been green
- need replacements as soon as possible
- photos enclosed
- phones will be sent back immediately

Email 2

- incorrect invoice – ref. no. BF 13261
- tom-wilkes@phoneworld.com
- charged for 65 pieces not 56
- need new invoice fast
- payment already completed
- refund required
- by end of current month



© Thinkstock/
iStock

M 10 Writing business emails – useful expressions



Salutations

English expression	German expression
Dear Sir or Madam	Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren (unbekannter Empfänger)
Dear Mr/Ms ...	Sehr geehrte(r) Herr/Frau ... (namentl. Anrede)
Dear John/Ann/... (first name)	Liebe/r John/Ann/...

Starting an email

English expression	German expression
We see from your website that ...	Auf Ihrer Webseite haben wir gesehen/gelesen, dass ...
We have received the delivery of 3 March.	Wir haben die Lieferung vom 3. März erhalten.
Thank you for your letter/email of ... (date)	Danke für Ihren Brief/Ihre E-Mail vom ...
It was good to meet you at the trade fair.	Es war nett, Sie auf der Messe kennenzulernen.

Asking for information

English expression	German expression
Your offer is very interesting.	Ihr Angebot ist sehr interessant.
Please could you send us your latest catalogue?	Könnten Sie uns bitte Ihren neuesten Katalog schicken?
We need the information urgently.	Wir brauchen die Informationen dringend.
We would like to receive further information about ...	Wir bitten Sie, uns weitere Informationen über ... zukommen zu lassen.

Describing problems

English expression	German expression
Please could you replace the damaged items?	Könnten Sie die beschädigte Ware bitte ersetzen?
After unpacking the goods we found that four of the items were damaged.	Nach Auspacken der Ware stellten wir fest, dass vier Artikel beschädigt waren.
We are attaching a photo of the damage.	Ein Foto des Schadens finden Sie im Anhang.
Unfortunately, there is an error in the invoice.	Leider enthält die Rechnung einen Fehler.
We would like replacements as soon as possible.	Wir bitten Sie, uns die Ersatzteile so schnell wie möglich zu liefern.
We are dissatisfied with the quality of the goods.	Wir sind unzufrieden mit der Qualität der Ware.
Could you please send the revised invoice by the end of the week?	Könnten Sie uns die korrigierte Rechnung bitte bis Ende der Woche schicken?
I have still not received a copy of ...	Ich habe leider immer noch keine Kopie/kein Exemplar der/des ... erhalten.
Please send us exact details of the damage.	Schicken Sie uns bitte genaue Angaben zum entstandenen Schaden.
We will reimburse you for the costs.	Wir werden die Kosten erstatten.

Thanking someone

English expression	German expression
Thank you for your help/your cooperation.	Vielen Dank für Ihre Hilfe/Ihre Zusammenarbeit.

Making special requests

English expression	German expression
We need the goods by 24 May at the latest.	Wir bräuchten die Ware bis spätestens zum 24. Mai.
If we order 20 articles, could you give us a discount of 10%?	Wenn wir 20 Artikel bestellen, können Sie uns einen Mengenrabatt von 10 % anbieten?
We would be very grateful if ...	Wir wären Ihnen sehr dankbar, wenn ...

Apologising

English expression	German expression
We apologise for the delay.	Wir möchten uns für die Verspätung entschuldigen.
Please accept our apologies for...	Wir entschuldigen uns für ...
We would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused.	Wir möchten uns für die entstandenen Unannehmlichkeiten entschuldigen.

Attachments

English expression	German expression
Please find the file you requested attached.	Im Anhang finden Sie die angefragte Datei.
Please refer to the attached document.	Bitte beziehen Sie sich auf das Dokument im Anhang.
Attached you will find my CV.	Im Anhang finden Sie meinen Lebenslauf.

Concluding

English expression	German expression
We hope to hear from you soon.	Wir hoffen, bald von Ihnen zu hören.
We look forward to hearing from you soon.	Wir freuen uns, bald von Ihnen zu hören.
If you have any questions, you can contact me on my mobile phone.	Wenn Sie Fragen haben, können Sie mich auf meinem Handy erreichen.
If you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.	Setzen Sie sich bitte mit uns in Verbindung, falls Sie weitere Informationen benötigen.

Close

English expression	German expression
Yours faithfully	Mit freundlichen Grüßen (unbekannter Empfänger)
Yours sincerely	Mit freundlichen Grüßen (namentliche Anrede)
Kind/Best regards	Viele/Herzliche Grüße