



Rare email expressions

The following email expressions are rare and often overused by language learners. What situation might you use them in, and what are the alternatives?

1. Dear Sir/ Dear Sirs/ Sir
 2. To whom it may concern
 3. Dear colleagues
 4. Dear Alex Case
 5. Hello Jennifer
 6. Dear John
- Hi!
7. This is Alex Case.
 8. Thank you for your kind letter of 5 January.
 9. Thank you for taking the time to read this email.
 10. Thank you for your cooperation.
 11. I look forward to your reply.
 12. Sincerely
 13. Yours truly/ Very truly yours

Suggested answers

1. This is considered a bit sexist, so “Dear Sir or Madam” or “Dear Sir/ Madam” is better.
2. This is only used when you really have no idea who or how many people will read something, e.g. when writing a will or a job reference that an employee will take with them. It is not the same as “Dear Sir or Madam”, and that and “Dear Sir/ Madam” are much more common.
3. “To: All staff”, “Dear all”, “Hi everyone” and “Hi guys” (in order of formality) are more common.
4. This is wrong, but might be the only option if you don’t know their gender and you feel that “Dear Alex” would be too informal.
5. “Dear Jennifer”, “Hello” and “Hi Jennifer” are more common.
6. “Hi John” and “Dear John” (with “How are you?” as the next line) are usually better.
7. We rarely put our name at the beginning of an email. If we really want to introduce ourselves, we need to use an expression like “I would like to introduce myself” or “I am.. and I work for...”
8. This is a bit old fashioned. The normal start is “Thank you for your letter of 5 January”, and if the letter really was kind you can put that in the next line with an expression like “It was very kind of you to invite me to...”
9. This expression and “Thank you for your kind attention” do exist, but it is rare to use them in English emails. It is usually better just to use one of the standard email endings (“I look forward to hearing from you” or “If you have any further questions, please contact me at any time.”) or just “Thanks”.
10. This is used after explaining a rule, e.g. a memo to all staff about the company smoking policy. It is not the same as “Thank you in advance”, which is much more common.
11. “I look forward to hearing from you (soon)” is much more common.
12. “Yours sincerely”/ “Sincerely yours” is more common.
13. These expressions are both a bit old fashioned and more used in personal communications. Other expressions like “Yours” and “Best regards” are more suitable.