

Emailing Meaning and Formality Differences

*Decide if the phrases in each section below have different meanings and write D next to them if they do. If there are more than two phrases in one section, **they all have the same meaning or all have different meanings**. The other sections all have phrases with the same meanings but different levels of formality, in which case you can write S next to them. Expressions on the same line with a slash (/) between them have the same meaning and level of formality, so just compare them to the expressions on other lines.*

Opening greeting

Dear John

Dear Mr Smith

Hi John

John/ Hi

Dear Sir or Madam

To whom it may concern

Dear all

Hi/ Hi guys

Hi everyone

To: All staff

Opening line

I just got your mail.

Thank you for your email.

Thanks for your email.

Thanks for your mail.

Thank you for writing back so quickly.

Thank you very much for writing back to me so quickly.

Thanks for your quick reply.

Wow, that was quick!

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to reply to your email.

Sorry for my late reply.

Long time no see!

Sorry for my late reply.

Sorry I haven't been in touch.

It was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to be able to meet you last week.

It was a pleasure to meet you last week.

It was great to meet you last week./ Thanks for meeting me last week.

About...

I am writing to you in connection with/ regarding/ with regards to/ concerning...

I'm writing to you about...

Re:...

Regarding...

I am writing to you in order to...

I'm writing to...

How are things?/ How's life?/ How's it going?/ How are you doing?

How are you?

I hope you are well.

Wassup?

Are you okay?

How are you?

Good weekend?

How was your weekend?/ Hope you had a good weekend.

I hope you had a good weekend.

I don't have much time to write at the moment but I thought that you might need to know that...

Just a quick note to say...

This is just a quick note to say...

My name is Alex Case...

This is Alex Case.

Body

Here is the document.

I've attached the document.

Please find attached the document.

Please find the document attached./ Please see the attached document for more details.

The document is attached.

Please follow the following steps:

Please see the information attached.

Please see the information below.

Can I give you...?

Can you give me...?

Please give me...

Finish by...

I need you to finish by.../ Make sure you finish by.../ Don't forget to finish by...

I'd like you to finish by...

Please finish by.../ Please ensure that you finish by...

Would you please finish by...?/ I'm afraid I have to ask you to finish by...

Can you tell me...?

Could you inform me...?

Could you possibly give me some information related to...?

I need some info about...

Am I allowed to...?

Do you mind if I...?

Is it okay for me to...?

Would you mind at all if I...?

... if that is convenient with you.

... if you are available./ ... if that suits you.

... if you're free./ ... if that's OK with you.

Do you fancy... with us?/ How about... with us?

It would be our great pleasure if you could attend...

We'd like to invite you to...

I am not happy with.../ ... was not good enough.

I'm very angry about.../ ... was terrible.

I was not entirely satisfied with.../ ... did not meet the high standards that I expected.

Closing line

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I'm looking forward to your reply.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Write soon!

I am waiting for your reply.

I expect to hear from you soon.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I look forward to your quick reply.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you soon.

I look forward to hearing from you.

I look forward to seeing you.

I hope we have the chance to meet again soon.

I look forward to meeting you then.

I look forward to seeing you then.

CU then!

I look forward to seeing you then.

I'm looking forward to seeing you then.

See you on Monday.

If you need any more info, just let me know.

If you need any more information, please let me know.

If you need more info, just drop me a line.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Any more questions, just let me know.

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

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

If you have any more questions, please contact me.

If you have any more questions, please contact me.

If you need any more information, please let me know.

Any feedback you can give me on this would be gratefully accepted.

If you need any more information, please contact me at any time.

Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Cheers.

Thank you in advance.

Thank you.

Thanks.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Thank you in advance.

Thanks for your patience.

Thanks for your understanding.

Thanks again.

I hope that is okay.

Thank you in advance.

Hope that's OK.

I hope that is acceptable with you.

I hope that is okay.

Sound OK?

Again, please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

I'm sorry about that.

Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.

So sorry!!!

Sorry 'bout that.

Closing greeting

All the best

Best

Best regards

Best wishes

Hugs and kisses/ XXX/ XOXO

Lots of love

Regards/ Yours

Sincerely/ Sincerely yours/ Yours sincerely/ Yours faithfully

Name at the end

A

A.M.Case (Mr)

Al

Alex

Alex Case

With the other sections (those with phrases that have the same meaning as each other), label each sentence 1, 2, 3 etc from the least formal/ most casual to the most formal/ most polite.



Suggested answers

NB: Ones with different meanings can't be ranked by formality and so are not listed below.

Opening greeting

- 1 John/ Hi
- 2 Hi John
- 3 Dear John
- 4 Dear Mr Smith

- 1 Hi/ Hi guys
- 2 Hi everyone
- 3 Dear all
- 4 To: All staff

Opening line

- 1 I just got your mail.
- 2 Thanks for your mail.
- 3 Thanks for your email.
- 4 Thank you for your email.

- 1 Wow, that was quick!
- 2 Thanks for your quick reply.
- 3 Thank you for writing back so quickly.
- 4 Thank you very much for writing back to me so quickly.

- 1 Sorry for my late reply.
- 2 I'm sorry it's taken me so long to reply to your email.

- 1 It was great to meet you last week./ Thanks for meeting me last week.
- 2 It was a pleasure to meet you last week.
- 3 It was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to be able to meet you last week.

- 1 About...
- 2 Re:...
- 3 Regarding...
- 4 I'm writing to you about...
- 5 I am writing to you in connection with/ regarding/ with regards to/ concerning...

- 1 I'm writing to...
- 2 I am writing to you in order to...

- 1 Wassup?
- 2 How are things?/ How's life?/ How's it going?/ How are you doing?
- 3 How are you?
- 4 I hope you are well.

- 1 Good weekend?
- 2 How was your weekend?/ Hope you had a good weekend.
- 3 I hope you had a good weekend.

- 1 Just a quick note to say...
- 2 This is just a quick note to say...
- 3 I don't have much time to write at the moment but I thought that you might need to know that...

Body

- 1 Here is the document.
- 2 I've attached the document.
- 3 The document is attached.
- 4 Please find the document attached./ Please see the attached document for more details.
- 5 Please find attached the document.

- 1 Finish by...
- 2 I need you to finish by.../ Make sure you finish by.../ Don't forget to finish by...
- 3 Please finish by.../ Please ensure that you finish by...
- 4 I'd like you to finish by...
- 5 Would you please finish by...?/ I'm afraid I have to ask you to finish by...

- 1 I need some info about...
- 2 Can you tell me...?
- 3 Could you inform me...?
- 4 Could you possibly give me some information related to...?

- 1 Is it okay for me to...?
- 2 Am I allowed to...?
- 3 Do you mind if I...?
- 4 Would you mind at all if I...?

- 1 ... if you're free./ ... if that's OK with you.
- 2 ... if you are available./ ... if that suits you.
- 3 ... if that is convenient with you.

- 1 Do you fancy... with us?/ How about... with us?
- 2 We'd like to invite you to...
- 3 It would be our great pleasure if you could attend...

- 1 I'm very angry about.../ ... was terrible.
- 2 I am not happy with.../ ... was not good enough.
- 3 I was not entirely satisfied with.../ ... did not meet the high standards that I expected.



Closing line

- 1 Write soon!
- 2 Looking forward to hearing from you.
- 3 I'm looking forward to your reply.
- 4 I look forward to hearing from you soon.

- 1 CU then!
- 2 See you on Monday.
- 3 I'm looking forward to seeing you then.
- 4 I look forward to seeing you then.

- 1 If you need more info, just drop me a line.
- 2 If you need any more info, just let me know.
- 3 If you need any more information, please let me know.
- 4 If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

- 1 Any more questions, just let me know.
- 2 If you have any more questions, please contact me.
- 3 If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- 4 If you have any further questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

- 1 Cheers.
- 2 Thanks.
- 3 Thank you.
- 4 Thank you in advance.
- 5 Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

- 1 Sound OK?
- 2 Hope that's OK.
- 3 I hope that is okay.
- 4 I hope that is acceptable with you.

- 1 So sorry!!!
- 2 Sorry 'bout that.
- 3 I'm sorry about that.
- 4 Again, please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.
- 5 Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.



Closing greeting

- 1 Hugs and kisses/ XXX/ XOXO
- 2 Lots of love
- 3 Best wishes
- 4 Best
- 5 All the best
- 6 Regards/ Yours
- 7 Best regards
- 8 Sincerely/ Sincerely yours/ Yours sincerely/ Yours faithfully

Name at the end

- 1 A
- 2 Al
- 3 Alex
- 4 Alex Case
- 5 A.M.Case (Mr)

Without looking above for now, fill the columns below with characteristics of formal and informal emailing phrases.

Characteristics of formal emailing phrases	Characteristics of informal emailing phrases

Still without looking at the first worksheets for now, add these characteristics to the table.

Unlike spoken English

Long words (often with shorter words with the same meaning also available)

Long sentences

Polite words and expressions used

Indirect/ Diplomatic

Like spoken English

Words cut out of longer versions of the same sentence

Idioms made of short words put together

Abbreviations (= short forms of words)

Direct

Avoiding contractions (= not using “I’m”, “We’ve” etc)

Write examples of the things above in the spaces given, starting with your own ideas then looking at the previous worksheets. Start with the characteristics which you aren't sure about. Most have more than one example there.



Suggested answers

Some could go in other places below.

Characteristics of formal emailing phrases

Unlike spoken English

Dear John

Dear Mr Smith

Dear Sir or Madam

To whom it may concern

Dear all

To: All staff

I hope you are well.

Please find attached the document.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you in advance.

A.M.Case (Mr)

Long words (often with shorter words with the same meaning also available)

It was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to be able to meet you last week.

It was a pleasure to meet you last week.

... if that is convenient with you.

... if you are available.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Long sentences

I don't have much time to write at the moment but I thought that you might need to know that...

Could you possibly give me some information related to...?

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

Polite words and expressions used

Would you mind at all if I...?

It would be our great pleasure if you could attend...

Any feedback you can give me on this would be gratefully accepted.

Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.

Indirect/ Diplomatic

I was not entirely satisfied with.../ ... did not meet the high standards that I expected.

Avoiding contractions (not using "I'm", "We've" etc)

I am writing to you in connection with/ regarding/ with regards to/ concerning...

I hope you are well.

... if you are available.

... if that is convenient with you.

I am not happy with...

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I hope that is acceptable with you.

Characteristics of informal emailing phrases

Like spoken English

Hi John

Hi

Hi everyone

Hi guys

Wow, that was quick!

Long time no see!

How are things?/ How's life?/ How's it going?/ How are you doing?

Wassup?

Here is the document.

I've attached the document.

Do you fancy... with us?/ How about... with us?

Cheers.

Thanks

Alex Case

Words cut out of longer versions of the same sentence

Sorry for my late reply.

About...

Regarding...

Good weekend?

Hope you had a good weekend.

Just a quick note to say...

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Hope that's OK.

Sound OK?

Idioms made of short words put together

Sorry I haven't been in touch.

If you need more info, just drop me a line.

Abbreviations (= short forms of words)

Re:...

I need some info about...

CU then!

If you need any more info, just let me know.

Sorry 'bout that.

Direct

I'm very angry about.../ ... was terrible.

Emailing politeness competition game

Work in groups of two to four students. Without looking above, choose one of the lines below and take turns making it more and more formal. It doesn't matter if it is too formal for normal use. Whenever anyone gives up, the person who made the most formal version (often but not always meaning the longest one) wins that round. Discuss which of those phrases is actually most useful for your emailing, then do the same with other sentences from below.

Opening greeting

John/ Hi

Hi

Opening line

I just got your mail.

Wow, that was quick!

Sorry for my late reply.

It was great to meet you last week.

About...

I'm writing to...

Wassup?

Good weekend?

Just a quick note to say...

Body

Here is the document.

Finish by...

I need some info about...

Is it okay for me to...?

... if you're free./ ... if that's OK with you.

Do you fancy... with us?/ How about... with us?

I'm very angry about.../ ... was terrible.

Closing line

Write soon!

CU then!

If you need more info, just drop me a line.

Any more questions, just let me know.

Cheers.

Sound OK?

So sorry!!!

Closing greeting

Hugs and kisses/ XXX/ XOXO

Name at the end

A

Without looking above, brainstorm at least two phrases into each of the categories below.

Opening greeting

Writing to one person whose name you know

Writing to one person whose name you don't know

Writing to a group of people/ everybody

Opening line

Replying to an email

Emailing after meeting someone

Giving the topic of the email

Social opening lines

Starting short emails

Body

Sending attachments

Commands/ Instructions/ Rules

Requests/ Enquiries



Asking for permission

Making arrangements (fixing meetings, appointments, etc)

Invitations

Complaints

**Closing line
Reply expected**

Mentioning the next face to face meeting

Offering more emails if needed

Ending (big or unusual) requests

Ending emails apologising/ responding to complaints

Closing greeting

Name at the end

Look at the previous worksheet for more examples, making sure you exclude ones which aren't suitable, then compare your ideas with the answer key on the next page. Then brainstorm similar language for other functions, if possible at different levels of formality.

Suggested answers

Note that other answers are possible. Phrases which are probably too formal or informal to be useful have been left out.

Opening greeting

Writing to one person whose name you know

Dear John

Dear Mr Smith

Hi John

John/ Hi

Writing to one person whose name you don't know

Dear Sir or Madam

Dear Sir/ Madam

Writing to a group of people/ everybody

Dear all

Hi

Hi everyone

Hi guys

To: All staff

Opening line

Replying to an email

Thank you for your email.

Thanks for your email.

Thanks for your mail.

Thank you very much for writing back to me so quickly.

Thanks for your quick reply.

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to reply to your email.

Sorry for my late reply.

Emailing after meeting someone

It was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to be able to meet you last week.

It was a pleasure to meet you last week.

It was great to meet you last week.

Thanks for meeting me last week.

Giving the topic of the email

About...

I am writing to you in connection with/ regarding/ with regards to/ concerning...

I'm writing to you about...

Re:...

Regarding...

I am writing to you in order to...

I'm writing to...

Social opening lines

How are things?/ How's life?/ How's it going?/ How are you doing?

How are you?

I hope you are well.

Good weekend?

How was your weekend?/ Hope you had a good weekend.

I hope you had a good weekend.

Starting short emails

I don't have much time to write at the moment but I thought that you might need to know that...

Just a quick note to say...

This is just a quick note to say...

Body**Sending attachments**

Here's the document.

I've attached the document.

Please find the document attached./ Please see the attached document for more details.

The document is attached.

Please see the information attached.

Commands/ Instructions/ Rules

I need you to finish by.../ Make sure you finish by.../ Don't forget to finish by...

I'd like you to finish by...

Please finish by.../ Please ensure that you finish by...

Would you please finish by...?/ I'm afraid I have to ask you to finish by...

Requests/ Enquiries

Can you tell me...?

Could you inform me...?

Could you possibly give me some information related to...?

I need some info about...

Asking for permission

Am I allowed to...?

Do you mind if I...?

Is it okay for me to...?

Would you mind at all if I...?

Making arrangements (fixing meetings, appointments, etc)

... if that is convenient with you.

... if you are available./ ... if that suits you.

... if you're free./ ... if that's OK with you.

Invitations

Do you fancy... with us?/ How about... with us?

It would be our great pleasure if you could attend...

We'd like to invite you to...

Complaints

I am not happy with.../ ... was not good enough.

I'm very angry about.../ ... was terrible.

I was not entirely satisfied with.../ ... did not meet the high standards that I expected.

Closing line**Reply expected**

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I'm looking forward to your reply.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you soon.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mentioning the next face to face meeting

I hope we have the chance to meet again soon.

I look forward to meeting you then.

I look forward to seeing you then.

CU then!

I'm looking forward to seeing you then.

See you on Monday.

Offering more emails if needed

If you need any more info, just let me know.

If you need any more information, please let me know.

If you need more info, just drop me a line.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Any more questions, just let me know.

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

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

If you have any more questions, please contact me.

Ending (big or unusual) requests

Any feedback you can give me on this would be gratefully accepted.

Any assistance that you could give me in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Cheers.

Thank you in advance.

Thank you.

Thanks.

Ending emails apologising/ responding to complaints

Again, please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

I'm sorry about that.

Once again, please accept our sincerest apologies for any inconvenience that might have been caused.

So sorry!!!

Sorry 'bout that.

Closing greeting

All the best

Best

Best regards

Best wishes

Hugs and kisses/ XXX/ XOXO

Lots of love

Regards/ Yours

Sincerely/ Sincerely yours/ Yours sincerely/ Yours faithfully

Name at the end

A

A.M.Case (Mr)

Al

Alex

Alex Case

Speaking

Choose a function and level of formality and dictate what you would write in such a situation. Your partner should listen and answer with the same level of formality.

Writing homework

Choose three functions such as those above and write the emails, one as a formal email, one as an informal/ casual email, and one with a medium level of formality.