

Business emails tips and useful phrases

Cross off bad tips for English emails below, leaving any which are good, OK, optional, etc.

Email opening greetings tips and useful phrases

1. You should usually write “Dear Mr/ Ms + full name” if you know the person’s name but you’ve had no contact before (“Dear John Smith”, etc).
2. An informal, friendly email should have no greeting or just a name (“Alex” or nothing).
3. An informal, friendly email should start with “Hi”, maybe with their name (“Hi Alex”, etc).
4. Use “Dear” plus a description of someone’s position if you don’t know their name (“Dear CEO”, “Dear teacher”, etc).
5. Use “Dear Sir or Madam” or “Dear Sir/ Madam” when you don’t know someone’s name.
6. Use “Dear Sir or Madam” for very formal emails, even if you know someone’s name.
7. Use “Dear Madam” when you know you’re emailing a woman but don’t know her name.
8. You can start emails to groups of people with “To: All...”, “Dear all”, “Hi everyone” or “Hi guys”, depending on the level of formality.
9. You can start emails with “To” instead of “Dear” with people’s names (“To John”, etc)
10. You can use a comma after both the opening greeting and closing greeting (“Dear John,” and “All the best,” etc).
11. You can use no comma after both the opening greeting and closing greeting.

Email opening lines tips and useful phrases

12. You should usually open an email with your own name (“This is Alex”, “My name is Alex Case and I...”, etc).
13. If possible, it’s best to start an email with mention of your previous contact (“Thank you for your letter last week”, “Thanks for meeting me yesterday”, “Thanks for speaking to me on Skype at such short notice on Friday”, “Long time no see!”, “It was so nice to see you again on Tuesday”, etc).
14. With people you know, it’s often nice to start with a friendly, social opening line such as a small talk question (“How’s it going?”, “Hope you are well”, etc).
15. The best friendly “How...?” question in emails is usually “How are you?”
16. It’s usually best to be casual and/ or specific in a social opening line (“How was your trip to Canada?”, “How’s it going?”, “How was the big presentation?”, etc)
17. Especially if there hasn’t been recent previous contact, it is common to start emails with the topic (“I’m writing to you about/ in connection with/ with regards to/ regarding/ because/ to/ in order to...”, etc)
18. Opening lines are usually just one or two sentences, then you should start the body of the email with a new paragraph.

The body of emails tips and useful phrases

19. You should avoid one-sentence paragraphs in the body of the email.
20. A new paragraph means a new topic.
21. It is modern style to leave a blank line between paragraphs.
22. In traditional-style emails and letters, you put an indent at the beginning of new paragraphs (= a few spaces before you start the first word of the new paragraph).
23. It is best to put both an indent and a blank line between paragraphs.
24. Start each sentence of the paragraph on a new line (like a poem or song lyrics).

25. It's common to refer to information in other parts of the email ("Please see... below", "Please find... attached", etc).
26. Use "Please+ verb", "Would you...?" or "I'd like you to..." for requests/ asking for help.
27. Use "Can...?", "Could... (possibly)...?", "I would be grateful if you could...", etc for requests/ asking for help.
28. It's more polite to use vague hurrying up phrases like "ASAP or "as soon as you can" than to write specific deadlines like "by (close of business on) Friday because..."
29. You can highlight important information with brackets (), triangular brackets (<>), exclamation marks (!), multiple exclamation marks (!!!), or CAPITAL LETTERS.
30. You should highlight important information with expressions like "Please note that..." and "NB..."

Formality in emails tips and useful phrases

31. Abbreviations like "asap", "at the mo", "CU on Monday", "info", "btw", "Thx", "BR", "BW" and "ATB", are so common in business that they can be used in any kind of email nowadays, including formal requests and complaints.
32. Latin abbreviations like "e.g.", "i.e.", "NB", "a.m.", "p.m.", "PS" and "etc." can be used in all kinds of emails, including formal ones.

Ending business emails tips and useful phrases

Email closing lines tips and useful phrases

33. Use "Thank you for your cooperation" to end most business emails.
34. Use "Thank you for your cooperation" to end requests such as asking them to send you a document.
35. Only use "Thank you for cooperation" for commands/ instructions, usually only group emails on what everyone has to do.
36. Use "Thanks" to thank people (again) for their (previous) help.
37. It's good to mention the next contact between you in your final line ("I'm looking forward to hearing from you", "Looking forward to seeing you soon", "See you then", etc)
38. Finish with "I expect your quick reply" and "I'm waiting for your reply" when you need a quick answer.
39. Use a phrase starting with "If..." if there might be a reply but you don't necessarily need a response ("If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me", "If you have any more questions, please contact me", "If you need any more info, just let me know", etc)

Email closing greetings tips and useful phrases

40. Use "Thanks and regards" to finish most of your business emails.
41. End more informal business emails with friendlier closing greetings like "All the best" and "Best wishes"
42. It's alright to use only your automatic email signature to end an email without writing a different closing greeting and your name first.

Putting your name at the end of emails tips and useful phrases

43. In most business emails, we sign off with just our family name ("Tanaka" etc)
44. In formal emails, it's useful to give your title (Mr, Ms, etc) in brackets after your name.
Check as a class or with the key, making sure you understand why the bad ones are bad.

Suggested answers

with the bad tips underlined

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44. In formal emails, it's useful to give your title (Mr, Ms, etc) in brackets after your name. *Are there cultural differences above (e.g. things different in emails in your own language)?*

First of all without looking above, brainstorm suitable phrases into the gaps below.

Starting emails

Email opening greetings

Email opening lines

Phrases for the body of emails (requests, giving deadlines, highlighting important information, abbreviations, etc)

Ending emails

Email closing lines

Email closing greetings

Your name at the end of emails

Check above, making sure you haven't written the bad things, brainstorm more, then compare your extra phrases as a class or with a list of phrases.

p. 5

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