

Classify and rank the formal and informal Cambridge First email and letter phrases
Without looking below, put the cards that you are given into categories by function (= what the language is meant to do), then rank the words in each category by formality from most formal on the left to least formal on the right.

Hint: There should be three in each category.

Check your answers with the un-cut-up worksheet below.

Cards to cut up/ Suggested answers

| Very formal/ polite | Medium formality | Very informal/ casual/ friendly |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Opening greetings | | |
| Dear Mr/ Ms + <i>family name</i> | Dear + <i>first name</i> | Hi + <i>first name</i> + ! |
| Opening lines | | |
| I apologise for the delay in replying to your email. | I'm sorry for my late reply. | Sorry for taking so long to get back to you. |
| Thank you for your email yesterday regarding... | Thanks for your email about... | I was so thrilled to get your mail about... |
| I am writing to you in connection with... | I'm writing to you about... | Writing about... |
| I hope this email finds you well. | How are you? | How's it going?/ How are things?/ How's life? |

| Body of the email | | |
|--|---|---|
| Could you possibly give me some information about...? | I'd like to know... | You don't know..., do you? |
| In answer to your second question,... | You also asked me about... | ...and about..., I'd say... |
| May I suggest...?/ I would probably advise... | Have you thought about...? It's well worth it. | Whatever you do, don't miss.../ You really must... |
| Please find attached.../ Please find... attached. | I've attached... | Here's... |
| I am available for... at any time. | I'm free for... any time. | Just tell me when you want to... and I'll be there! |
| Unfortunately,...did not meet the standards that I expected. | ... was not really good enough. | ... was total rubbish. |
| Closing lines | | |
| I look forward to hearing from you. | I'm looking forward to hearing from you soon. | Write soon!/ Keep in touch. |
| I hope we have the opportunity to meet again soon. | I hope we have the chance to meet again soon. | Can't wait to see you again!/ Hope to see you soon! |
| If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. | If you have any more questions, please (feel free to) contact me. | If you need any more info, just drop me a line. |
| Closing greetings | | |
| Yours sincerely/ Sincerely yours/ Best regards | Best regards/ Yours/ Regards | Best wishes/ Hugs and kisses/ Lots of love |

What are the general differences between formal and informal emailing phrases? Decide if each thing below is a characteristic of formal emails (F) or informal emails (I):

- Avoid contractions (= using “I am” instead of “I’m”, etc)
- Emoticons such as smileys
- Exclamation marks and multiple punctuation (e.g. !!!!)
- Grammar (e.g. word order) unlike normal speech
- Just first names
- Longer words and longer sentences
- No subject or no subject and no auxiliary verb
- Phrasal verbs like “get + back + to + me”
- Idioms made from short words like “keep + in + touch”
- Idiomatic language or slang
- Similar to speech
- Short forms (btw etc)
- Very polite language such as “Would you mind...?”

Use those hints to help fill the blank boxes below with the right levels of formality.

| Very formal | Medium formality | Very informal/ casual |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Opening greetings | | |
| | Dear + <i>first name</i> | |
| Opening lines | | |
| | I’m sorry for my late reply. | |
| | Thanks for your email about... | |
| | I’m writing to you about... | |
| | How are you? | |
| Body of the email | | |
| | I’d like to know... | |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| | | ...and about..., I'd say... |
| May I suggest...?/ I'd probably advise... | | |
| | I've attached... | |
| | I'm free for... any time. | |
| | ... was not really good enough. | |
| Closing lines | | |
| I look forward to hearing from you. | | |
| | I hope we have the chance to meet again soon. | |
| If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. | | |
| | Best regards/ Yours/ Regards | |

These examples of informal language are not acceptable in Cambridge B2 First. What do they have in common?

XOXO
gonna

CU
wanna

See ya

Wassup?

How could you write those things in friendly emails?