

Writing a formal email

Adapted from slide share (author MatthijsVanEijk) & MIT EECS Communication Lab (source: <https://bit.ly/2Rfym3a> & <https://bit.ly/35qmX8M>).

What is the purpose of your email

- Introduce yourself: As a second-year student in the Executive MBA program, I am writing to request a brief meeting with you to discuss opportunities in market research.
- Deny a request: Thank you for writing to ask about attending the conference in Baltimore. I wish I could approve your request.
- Apologize: Please accept my apology for missing the meeting yesterday. I am sorry that a medical appointment prevented my attending.
- Congratulate: Congratulations on successfully passing the bar exam. Your hard work has paid off!
- Invite: You are invited to the opening of the '2017 Fashion Fair' on Sunday, 16 April, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the AHOY in Rotterdam.
- Respond to a letter of complaint: Thank you for writing to us about your experience in the airport last week.
- Confirm an agreement: I am happy to confirm our agreement about the summer institute.
- Provide a reference: Jessica Dell has asked me to provide information to you in support of her job application, and I am pleased to do so.
- Request a letter of reference: I am applying to graduate schools in marine biology, and I would be very grateful if you would write a letter of reference for me.
- Request approval: I would appreciate your approval to attend a training program on project management to meet my annual performance goals. Here are the details:
- Request information: I am seeking the answers to two questions about customs declarations for a shipment to Russia.
- Share information: I received some important information from Dr. Owens, and I believe it will be useful to you as you analyze the research data.
- Explain a change in policy: I want to let you know about a new tuition reimbursement policy we will implement in January.
- Introduce a new employee: I am pleased to introduce Kathlyn Vargas, Manager of Training and Development.

Ask yourself

- Why am I writing this email?
- What do I want to tell my recipient?
- What do I want them to do as a result of my email?

It should be clear to the recipient

- Who the email is from.
- What the email is about.
- If a reply is necessary.

General suggestions

- Write the most important information first.
- Only include necessary information.
- Be concise and use simple grammar.
- Use numbers/bullet points and divide into paragraphs for a clear message.
- Be polite.

Write a clear and informative subject line

- Convince people they need to actually pay attention to your email.
- Ask that an action be taken by someone.

Clear opening statements

- In reply to your letter...
- Thanks for your email...
- Following our (phone) conversation...
- I am writing to inform you that...

Formal greeting

- To Whom It May Concern,
- Dear [name], / Dear Dr. [name],

Proofread before sending

- Is the recipient list correct?
- Check attachments/links.
- No missing words or other errors.

Try to avoid

- Contractions (don't → do not).
- Exclamation marks (only special occasion).
- Abbreviations and acronyms.

Closing statements

- Thank you:
 - Thank you for your help. / time / assistance / support.
 - I really appreciate the help. / time / assistance / support you've given me.
 - Thank you once more for your help in this matter.
- Future focus:
 - I look forward to hearing from you soon / meeting you next Tuesday.
 - I look forward to seeing you soon.
 - I'm looking forward to your reply.
 - We hope that we may continue to rely on your valued custom.
 - We look forward to a successful working relationship in the future.
 - Please advise as necessary.
 - I would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter.
- Offer assistance:
 - If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.
 - Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.
 - Please let me know if you have any questions.
 - Let me know if you need anything else.