Email writing

Formal emails are usually sent to people the writer doesn’t know or to people outside the company. Less formal emails are usually sent to people the writer knows and / or colleagues. If you are not sure how formal your email should be, copy the email style of the person who wrote to you, or use a semi-formal style.

The following are some guidelines on how to start and end emails with different levels of formality, along with some common phrases used in emails.

Formal emails
Formal emails are similar to letters.

Writing to someone when you do not know the name:

Opening
Dear Sir or Madam
Dear Sir / Madam

Closing
Yours faithfully (UK)
Sincerely (US)

Writing to someone when you know the name:

Opening
Dear Mr Thomas
Dear Dr Thomas
Dear Ms Smith (use for a married / unmarried woman)
Dear John Thomas

Closing
Regards
Yours sincerely (UK)
Sincerely (US)

Conpressions
When writing formal emails do not use contractions, such as I’m, didn’t, you’ll, etc.

Formal I am writing to ask for some information.
Informal I’m writing to ask for some information.

Semi-formal emails
Use semi-formal emails with people you do not know very well. Sometimes it is difficult to know if the email needs to be formal or semi-formal. It is a good idea to copy the email style of the person who writes to you.

Opening
Dear John
Dear Olivia

Closing
Thanks
Best regards
Yours

Informal emails
In many companies, informal emails are sent between colleagues.

Opening
Hi John
Hello Olivia
Hi (Use Hi or Hello without the person’s name.)
Hello
John (Start the email with the person’s first name.)
J (In very informal situations, you can write the first letter of the person’s name. This is for someone called John.)
You can also start an informal email with no opening at all.
Closing

Best wishes
All the best
Thanks

John (You can close an email with just your first name)
J (In very informal situations, you can write the first letter of your name. This is a closing for someone called John).

Formal and informal vocabulary

Formal emails use different vocabulary to informal emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to apologize for ...</td>
<td>Sorry for ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would appreciate it if you ...</td>
<td>Can you ... ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you happen to know ... ?</td>
<td>Do you know ... ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfortunately, I will not be able to ...</td>
<td>I can’t ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather not ...</td>
<td>I don’t want to ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>