

Writing an email

Overview

The purpose of an email is to communicate ideas and suggestions quickly and often more informally than in a letter. Emails can give the reader immediate feedback, opinions or information about a certain topic. Emails can also be used to persuade the reader of the writer's view and create a sense of dialogue. Emails can also provide a balanced argument which suggests different points of view, but lets the reader make up their own mind about the topic. The ways you use language and vocabulary when writing an email will depend on the audience and the purpose you are writing for.

Tips for writing an email

Language – think about:

- **the audience for the email** – often emails are sent to one person, but they can also be sent to multiple readers at the same time. An email sent to a group of people is likely to be semi-formal and would usually not include slang.
- **the context and your relationship to the reader** – the tone of most emails should be semi-formal, but some emails can be a little more relaxed in tone; for example, if you are mailing someone of your own age who you know well. Emails can also be more formal; for example, if you are emailing an official person.
- **how long your reader has to read your email** – busy people often receive a lot of emails each day, so making sure that your formal email sounds clear, professional and polite is important in order to make sure your message gets through.
- **the impression you create for your reader** – depending on the context, you should try and capture your reader's attention by being clear and concise, making your point logically and coherently.

Organisation:

- **Plan the main points you will deal with in your email before you start writing it** – an email may deal with just one overall topic, so stay focused and avoid adding unnecessary detail. The structure of a formal or semi-formal email is usually in three parts. For example:
 1. **a subject line** – just two or three words so that your reader can tell at a glance what the topic is, then a brief introduction to explain why you are writing. For example, if you are emailing a stranger, introduce yourself very briefly and then get straight to the point. If it is someone you know, you may need to remind your reader of the situation so far.
 2. **the body of the response** – include relevant points about the topic, developed and supported appropriately – you should divide your explanation into fairly short paragraphs, each dealing with a key aspect of the topic.
 3. **a closing section** – explain briefly what should happen next. If you want your reader to do something, make that clear here; for example, 'please let me know by Thursday if ...' or to show that you are open to further discussion, end your email on a friendly note; for example, 'thank you for your help with this – let's keep in touch'.
- **Make your email easy to read and follow** – for example, you might use headings or short lists where it's appropriate. You can also choose to emphasise the most important information with underlinings – but do not overdo it. Appropriate connecting words and phrases can be helpful – for example, 'However, it is crucial to remember ...'
- **Use a suitable greeting and sign off appropriately** – this will depend on who you are writing to and why, so for example 'Dear Mr Green' and perhaps 'Best wishes', or 'Dear Sir/Madam' and 'Yours faithfully'. If you are writing to a group informally and don't want to use all their names 'Greetings' might be a useful opening.

Example of an email

Please note: The example email in this resource may not match the requirements in every Cambridge syllabus and is just a demonstration of one type of email. Please read the syllabus carefully to find out more details about the type of email candidates are required to write.

Comments	
<p><i>Subject: Play in the community</i></p> <p><i>Dear Sir/Madam</i></p> <p><i>I'm writing in connection with the council's proposal for a new play area in the park. When I was young, I benefited greatly from outside play.</i></p> <p><i>Some people have expressed concern that a whole area of the park will be lost and that the lovely green space will be taken over by swings and climbing frames. They also say that it will be noisy.</i></p> <p><i>Others have a different view. They think that the village needs more facilities for children and that they really love to see children outside having fun rather than staring at their screens at home.</i></p> <p><i>The role of the council is very important in creating an environment suitable for families. More facilities such as a soft play area with cafe attached, and events and competitions would ensure the village is a great place to live.</i></p> <p><i>Yours faithfully</i></p> <p><i>Daisy Clark</i></p>	<p>The learner uses a subject line that identifies the topic of the email.</p> <p>The email is to be sent to a council official whose name is not known.</p> <p>In this paragraph, the candidate briefly describes some negative views.</p> <p>Here the candidate describes some positive views.</p> <p>The candidate makes some suggestions for the council to consider.</p> <p>An appropriate sign off is used.</p>