

Basics

	Formal / Neutral	Informal
Name	Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs Dupuis Dear Mary	Hi/Hello Mary Mary,... (or no name at all)
Previous contact	Thank you for your email of ... Further to your last email, ... I apologize for not getting in contact with you before now.	Thanks for your email. Re your email, ... Sorry I haven't written for ages, but I've been really busy.
Reason for writing	I am writing in connection with ... I am writing with regard to ... In reply to your email, here are ... Your name was given to me by ... We would like to point out that ...	Just a short note about ... I'm writing about ... Here's the ... you wanted. I got your name from ... Please note that ...
Giving information	I'm writing to let you know that ... We are able to confirm that ... I am delighted to tell you that ... We regret to inform you that ...	Just a note to say ... We can confirm that ... Good news! Unfortunately, ...
Attachments	Please find attached my report. I'm sending you ... as a pdf file.	I've attached ... Here is the ... you wanted.
Asking for information	Could you give me some information about ... I would like to know ... I'm interested in receiving/finding out ...	Can you tell me a little more about ... I'd like to know ... Please send me ...
Requests	I'd be grateful if you could ... I wonder if you could ... Do you think I could have ... ? Thank you in advance for your help in this matter.	Please could you ... Could you ...? Can I have ...? I'd appreciate your help on this.
Promising action	I will ... I'll investigate the matter. I will contact you again shortly.	I'll ... I'll look into it. I'll get back to you soon.
Offering help	Would you like me to ...? If you wish, I would be happy to ... Let me know whether you would like me to ...	Do you want me to ...? Shall I ...? Let me know if you'd like me to ...
Final comments	Thank you for your help. Do not hesitate to contact us again if you require any further information. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My direct line is ...	Thanks again for ... Let me know if you need anything else. Just give me a call if you have any questions. My number is ...
Close	I'm looking forward to ... (+ ing) Give my regards to ... Best wishes Regards	Looking forward to ... (+ ing) Best wishes to .. Speak to/see you soon. Bye (for now)/All the best

Negotiating a project

Asking for information	What are your usual charges (fees/rates) for ...? Can you give me some more information about ...?
Requests	Do you think you could ...? Would you be able to ...?
Emphasizing a main point	My main concern at this stage is ... The main thing for me is ...
Asking for a suggestion	How do you think we should deal with this? What do you think is the best way forward?
Making a suggestion	Why don't you ...? What about if we ...?
Negotiating: being firm	I understand what you're saying about ... (but ...) I can see what you're saying, but ...
Negotiating: being flexible	We would be prepared to ... (if ...) I am willing to ... (if ...)
Negotiating: agreeing	Okay, I'm happy with that for now. That's fine.
Next steps	I'll be in touch again soon with more details. Let's talk next week and see how things are going.
Closing	I look forward to working with you. I'm sorry that we couldn't use your services this time, but I hope there will be another opportunity.

Checking understanding

Technical problems	Did you get my last message sent on ...? Sorry, you forgot to attach the file. Can you send it again? I got your email, but I can't open the attachment. Did you mean to send this? I don't want to open it in case it's got a virus.
Asking for clarification	I'm not sure what you meant by ...? could you clarify? Which ... do you mean? I don't understand this point. Can you explain in a little more detail? Are you sure about that?
Giving clarification	Sorry, what I meant was ..., not ... I thought ..., but I may be wrong. I'll check and get back to you. The correct information is given below. Please amend your records accordingly. Sorry, forget my last email. You're right.
Close	I hope this clarifies the situation. Get back to me if there's anything else.

Arrangements

Meetings

	Formal / Neutral	Informal
Reason for writing	I'm writing to arrange a time for our meeting. What time would be convenient for you?	Just a quick note to arrange a time to meet. When would suit you?
Suggesting time/place	Could we meet on (day) in the (morning) at (time)?	How about (day) at (time)? Are you free sometime next week?
Saying when you are/ are not free	I would be able to attend the meeting on Thursday morning. I'm out of the office until 2pm. Any time after that would be fine. I'm afraid I can't manage next Monday.	I'm free Thursday am. I won't be around until after lunch. Any time after that is okay. Sorry, can't make it next Monday.
Confirming	I'd like to confirm ... That's fine. I will call/email you tomorrow to confirm the details.	Thursday is good for me. That should be okay. I'll get back to you if there's a problem.
Changing arrangements	This is to let you know that I will not be able to attend the next meeting next Thursday. I wonder if we could move it to ...? I apologize for any inconvenience caused.	Re our meeting next week, I'm afraid I can't make Thursday. How about ... instead? Sorry for the inconvenience.
Close	I look forward to meeting you in Brussels. Let me know if you need to change the arrangements.	See you in Brussels. Give me a call if anything changes.

Invitations

	Formal / Neutral	Informal
Inviting	We would be very pleased if you could come to ... I would like to invite you to ... / attend our ... Please let me know if you will be able to attend.	I'm writing to invite you to ... Would you like to come to ...? Please let me know if you can make it.
Prepare	Before the meeting it would be useful if you could prepare ... It would be helpful if you could bring ...	Please prepare ... before the meeting. Please bring to the meeting ...
Accepting	Thank you for your kind invitation. The date you suggest is fine. I would be delighted to attend the meeting. I am sure it will be very useful.	Thanks a lot for the invitation. The date's fine for me. I'd love to come to the meeting. It sounds like a great idea.
Refusing	Thank you for your kind invitation. Unfortunately, I have another appointment on that day. Please accept my apologies. I hope we will have the opportunity to meet on another occasion in the near future. I am sure that the meeting will be a great success.	Thanks a lot for your kind invitation. Unfortunately, I have something else in my schedule on that day. I hope we can meet up soon. Good luck with the meeting!

Writing Styles

	Formal / Neutral	Informal
Example phrases	Thank you for your email received 12 Feb. With regard/reference to ... I would be grateful if you could ... We regret to advise you that ... Please accept our apologies for ... I was wondering if you could ... We note that you have not ... We would like to remind you that ... It is necessary for me to ... It is possible that I will ... Would you like me to ...? However, .../In addition, ... / Therefore, ... If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting you next week	Thanks for the email. Re ... Please could you ... I'm sorry to tell you that ... I'm sorry for ... Could you ...? You haven't ... Don't forget that ... I need to ... I might ... Shall I ...? But, ... / Also, ... / So, ... If you'd like more details, let me know. See you next week.
Latin / Anglo-Saxon origin	Assistance / due to / enquire / inform / information / obtain / occupation / possess / provide / repair / request / requirements / verify	Help / because of / ask / tell / facts / get / job / have / give / fix / ask for / needs / check (prove)

Direct / Indirect

	Direct	Indirect: polite / diplomatic
Requests	Can you ...? Please could you ...	Could you ...? I was wondering if you could ...
Asking for permission	Can I ...? Could I ...?	Is it all right if ...? I wonder if I could ...?
Offering help	Can I ...? Shall I ...?	Would you like me to ...? Do you need any help with ...?
Making a suggestion	What about ... (+ing)? Shall we ...?	Why don't we ...? Perhaps we should ...?
Softening a strong comment	There is a problem. That will be very expensive. We can't do that . That gives us very little time. It will be better to ask Heidi. I disagree.	I'm afraid there is a small problem. It seems there is a slight problem. That might be quite expensive. Won't that be a bit expensive? I'm not sure we can do that. Actually, that doesn't give us much time. Wouldn't it be better to ask Heidi? I can see what you're saying, but ... Don't you think that ...? To be honest, I think it might be better to ...

Commercial

Request for information (customer)

Saying how you got the contact	We met last Thursday on your stand at the Munich Trade Fair. I am emailing you off your website, which I found through Google.
Giving reason for writing	We are a manufacturer / supplier / provider of ... We are interested in ... We are a Turkish company exporting to the EU, and we need ...
General requests	We would be grateful for some information about ... Please send us information about your product range and prices.
Specific requests	In particular, we would like to know ... Please send full details of your prices, discounts, terms of payment and delivery times. Could you also say whether there is any minimum order.
Close	An early reply would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to an early reply, and am sure that there is a market for your products here in Hungary.

Giving information (supplier)

Thanks	Thank you for your email of 4 June inquiring about ...
Giving factual information	We can quote a price of ... CIF / FOB Istanbul. We can delivery by ... (date) / within ... (period of time) The goods will be shipped 3 days from receipt of a firm order. We can offer a discount of ... on orders over We require payment by bank transfer / letter of credit. Our normal procedure is to ... Our normal terms for first-time customers are ... We can supply the items you require directly from stock.
Saying what you are attaching	I am attaching a document that gives full details of ... I am attaching our current catalogue and price list as a pdf file.
Highlighting one or two key points	You will see that ... You will note that our line of is on special offer.
Answering specific questions	You will also note that ... Our experience in this field includes ... We dispatch the goods within 24 hours of a firm order, and for first-time customers our minimum order is \$ 1,000. I am afraid that model is no longer available. However, ...
Close	We feel sure that ... May I suggest that I call you at your convenience to discuss the matter further? If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct line is...

Making an order (customer)

Open	Thank you for your recent email, and we accept your quotation. Our completed order form is attached, and we give full bank details below.
Close	Please acknowledge receipt of this order.

Confirming an order (supplier)

Open	<p>Your order has been received.</p> <p>We can confirm that your goods have been shipped.</p> <p>You can track shipping details on our website.</p> <p>Due to exceptional demand these items are temporarily out of stock. We hope to be able to ship your order within ... days and will keep you fully informed. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.</p>
Close	We are confident that the goods will meet your expectations. Should there be any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by email or phone

Asking for payment (supplier)

First reminder – open	<p>We are writing concerning a payment of \$12,600 for invoice number KJ678 which is now overdue. A copy of the invoice is attached.</p> <p>According to our records, the sum of \$4,500 is still outstanding on your account</p>
First reminder – action	<p>Please send a bank transfer to settle the account, or an explanation of why the balance is still outstanding. If you have already dealt with this matter, please disregard this email.</p> <p>We could appreciate your cooperation in resolving this matter as soon as possible.</p>
Second/third reminder – open	<p>On (date) I wrote to you regarding your company's unpaid account , amounting to \$4,500. May we please remind you that this amount is still outstanding.</p> <p>I wish to draw your attention to my previous emails of (dates) about the overdue payment on your account. We are very concerned that the matter has not yet received your attention.</p>
Second/third reminder – action	<p>We need a bank transfer in full settlement without further delay. Clearly, this situation cannot be allowed to continue, and we must ask you to take immediate action to settle your account.</p> <p>If you have any queries on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your cooperation.</p>
Final demand – open	<p>Following my emails of (dates) I must inform you that we have still not received payment for the outstanding sum of \$4,500.</p> <p>I wrote to you on (dates) regarding the balance of \$12,600 on your account. I attach copies of both emails. This sum is now two months overdue. We are very concerned that the matter has not yet received your attention.</p>
Final demand – action	<p>Unless we receive payment within seven days, we shall have no alternative but to take legal action to recover the money.</p> <p>In the meantime, your existing credit facilities have been suspended.</p>

Complaints and Apologies

Complaining (customer)

Open	I am writing ... in connection with my order FS690 which arrived this morning. to complain about the quality of a product I bought from your website. to complain about the poor service we received from your company. to draw your attention to the negative attitude of some people in your customer services section
Complaint	Our order dated 16 September clearly stated that we wanted 1,000 items, however you ... The goods were faulty / damaged / in poor condition. There seems to be an error in the invoice /a misunderstanding. The equipment I ordered has still not been delivered, despite my phone call you last week to say that it is needed urgently. The product I received was well below the standard expected. To make matters worse, when I called your company staff ...
Request for action	Please replace the faulty goods as soon as possible. We must insist on an immediate replacement / full refund. Unless I receive the goods by the end of this week, I will have no choice but to cancel my order.
Close	I hope that you will deal with this matter promptly as it is causing me considerable inconvenience.

Apologizing (supplier)

Open	I am writing in relation to your recent complaint.
Apologizing	I was very concerned to learn about ... Please accept my sincere apologies. I would like to apologize for the inconvenience you have suffered.
Denying responsibility	We appreciate that this has caused you considerable inconvenience, but we cannot accept any responsibility in this matter.
Promising action	Can you leave it with me? I'll look into the matter and get back to you tomorrow. I have looked into the matter and ... I have spoken to the staff involved, and ... We will send replacement items / give you a refund immediately. I can assure you that this will not happen again. We're having a temporary problem with We're doing everything we can to sort it out.
Compensation	To compensate for the inconvenience, we would like to offer you ...
Close	Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. Please accept my assurance that it will not happen again. Once again, I hope you will accept my apologies for the inconvenience caused. I very much hope you will continue to use our services in the future. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on my direct line...

Personal

Being Friendly

You heard something, but you are not sure	It seems that ... Apparently, ...
Something is true, but surprising	Actually, ... In fact, ...
Something is obvious or already known	Obviously, ... Of course ...
Good/ bad fortune	Unfortunately, ... Luckily, ...
Saying what you really think	To be honest, ... Frankly, ...
Going back to a topic	Well, ... So, ... Anyway, ...
Changing the topic	Anyway, ... So, ... By the way, ...
Summarizing with the most important point	Anyway, ... Basically, ...

Asking for advice

	Formal/Neutral	Informal
Open	I'd like your advice about a problem I have	I've got a bit of a problem.
Asking for advice	I was wondering if you had any ideas about ...? What would you advise me to do?	Do you have any ideas about ...? What should I do?
Close	Please write back when you have the time and let me know what you think.	Please email me when you get the chance.

Giving advice

	Formal/Neutral	Informal
Open	I was sorry to hear about your current difficulties.	I'm sorry you're having such a hard time at the moment.
Giving advice	I think it might be a good idea to ... Have you thought of ... (+ing)?	I think you should ... What about ... (+ing)?
Result	This would mean that ...	That way, ...
Options	I think this option would be preferable to ... (+ing)	I think it's better than ... (+ing)
Close	I hope I have been of some help.	I hope I've helped a bit.

Suggestions

Making a suggestion	I think we should / I suggest that we / Let's go to ... Shall we / Perhaps we could/Why don't we go to ...? I suggest... /How about going to ...?
Accepting	It's a great idea! I think your idea would work really well. It might be worth trying.
Rejecting	I'm not so sure about your idea. It sounds like a good idea, but I don't think it would work in practice. It sounds like a good idea, but I can see one or two problems.

Special situations

Thanks	Just a quick note to say many thanks for ... I really appreciate everything that you have done.
Good luck	Good luck with ...I would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in the future.
Congratulations	Many congratulations on your promotion / new job. I was delighted to hear the news about ... Well done!
Best wishes	Please give my best wishes/regards to ...
Bad news	I was so sorry to hear about ... I was really sorry to hear you're not well ...Hope you feel better soon. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know.

Job Application

Greeting	Dear Sir/Madam
Reason for writing	With reference to your advertisement on the ... website, I am interested in applying for the post of...
Your background and experience	I am 26 years old and am currently studying for a degree in ... at ... University. For the last two months I have been working as a ... at
The job itself	I am interested in this job because ... I feel that I would be well-suited for this job/have a lot of experience in ...
Referring to your CV	I have attached my CV as a Word document. You will notice that I ... as well as You will also notice that
Final comments	I would be grateful if you would consider my application. You will see from my CV that two people can be contacted as references, one is ... and the other is from I am available for interview in .../ by phone any weekday afternoon, and you can email me or telephone me on the number below.
Close	I look forward to hearing from you soon. Yours faithfully

Reports

Report structure

Introduction / Background	As requested at the Board meeting of 18 April, here is my report. The report will discuss / consider / describe / analyze / review ... The report is based on ... I have divided the report into three sections.
Findings	The findings / figures / results / investigations show that ... It appears that This has led to a situation where ... The graph/table shows that ...
Signposts	As can be seen in table 1 / section 2 / figure 3, ... As mentioned above, ... / ..., see below. ...and I will discuss this in more detail below /in section 3.2.
Conclusion / Recommendations	I (would like to) suggest /recommend that ... My specific recommendations are as follows.
Closing comments	Please have a look at the report and let me have your comments. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Linking words

Sequence	Firstly / secondly / finally
Talking generally	In general / usually / on the whole
Contrast	However / nevertheless / on the other hand
Adding another point	In addition / moreover / on another point
Examples	For example / for instance / e.g.
Alternatives	Either ... or ... / alternatively / instead of ...
Real (surprising) situation	In fact, / actually, / as a matter of fact
Something is obvious	Clearly / obviously / of course
Most important point	Especially / above all / in particular
Rephrasing	In other words / that is to say / i.e.
Result/consequence	As a result / therefore / for this reason
New topic	In relation to / regarding / with reference to

Careful, balanced style

Giving both sides of an argument	In general ..., however ... On the whole ..., but ...
Making a statement less general	Many / some ... Usually / typically / often ...
Making a statement less certain	It is possible / probable that ... It seems / appears that tends to be...
Making a comparison less strong	Substantially / considerably / much (+ comparative adjective) Significantly / relatively (+ comparative adjective) Marginally / slightly (+ comparative adjective)
Concluding	On balance, ... Taking all the above points into consideration, ...

Here are some more business email and letter phrases. In this list we look at how to make requests, complain, apologise and give bad news.

The examples in the left column are **more formal**. The right-hand column shows the **less formal** equivalent.

When we make a request:

[more formal]

I would be grateful if you could

I would appreciate (it) if you could

[less formal]

Could you possibly ... ?

Could you please ... ?

When we agree to a request someone has made:

[more formal]

I would be delighted to

(delighted means very happy)

[less formal]

I will be happy to

When apologising:

[more formal]

I apologise for the delay in replying.

I/We apologise for the inconvenience.

I/We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Please accept our/my sincere apologies.

[less formal]

Sorry for the delay in replying.

Sorry for the inconvenience.

Sorry for any trouble caused.

I/We are very sorry

When giving bad news:

[more formal]

I/We regret that

I/We regret to inform you that

I am afraid that I must inform you of/that

[less formal]

Unfortunately

I am sorry to have to tell you that

I am sorry to have to tell you that