

## Lesson 5.

### Letters and Emails

#### *Warming-up.*

“Effective writing has the illusion of speech without its bad habits. The reader hears a writer speaking to a reader. The writing should flow with grace, pace and clarity – not the way we speak but, better than that, the way we should speak.” – *Donald M. Murray, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist*

#### *Questions to discuss.*

1. What do you think the quote means by “the illusion of speech”?
2. Why might business writing need to be “better than” spoken communication?
3. In your opinion, what are some “bad habits” of speech that should be avoided in writing?
4. Do you agree that writing should flow with grace, pace, and clarity? Why or why not?
5. How does the tone of a written business message differ from a spoken one?
6. Can you recall a time when a poorly written email caused confusion? What was the problem?
7. What makes writing sound too casual or too stiff in a professional context?
8. How does knowing your audience affect the way you write a business letter or email?
9. Do you think writing skills are more important or less important in the digital age? Why?
10. What qualities make a business email effective and professional in your opinion?

### I. PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

*A. Look at the types of letters below. Which of them would you write in everyday life? Which might appear in a business or professional context?*

- ✓ a thank-you letter
- ✓ an academic recommendation letter
- ✓ a wedding invitation
- ✓ a letter of condolence
- ✓ a letter of acceptance
- ✓ a job application
- ✓ an overdue payment reminder

*Sort these into two categories: Personal letters and Professional/Business letters*

Personal	Business/Professional
<i>(e.g. wedding invitation)</i>	<i>(e.g. job application)</i>

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*B. Now, think about the types of letters commonly used in a workplace or business environment. Can you think of more examples?*

*Below are some common business letters. Match the type of business letter and its definition.*

Business Letter	Definition
1. Cover Letter	A. Sent to express dissatisfaction with a product, service, or situation.
2. Resignation Letter	B. A formal written statement to leave a job or position.
3. Letter of Complaint	C. A letter accompanying a CV to explain interest in a job or position.
4. Inquiry Letter	D. Written to express regret for a mistake or inconvenience.
5. Apology Letter	E. Used to gather information about products, services, or opportunities.
6. Recommendation Letter	F. Sent to thank someone for their time, help, or collaboration.
7. Thank-You Letter	G. Confirms the offer of employment or contract terms to a candidate.
8. Offer Letter	H. Written after a meeting or interview to reinforce interest or next steps.
9. Follow-Up Letter	I. Provides positive feedback about someone's skills or character.
10. Adjustment Letter	J. A reply to a complaint, often including compensation or resolution.

*C. Group types of business letters into purposes:*

Purpose	Examples
To apply/request	
To inform/notify	
To persuade/negotiate	
To respond	
To manage conflict	

*D. Prediction. Work with your partner to fill in the K-W-L chart with what you Know about Business Letters and Emails, and what you Want to know. Then, after reading and completing activities, complete column L to summarize what you've learned, fill in what you have learned.*

<i>K – What I Know</i>	<i>W – What I Want To Know</i>	<i>L – What I Learned</i>
<i>Example:</i> Some letters should be formal.	What phrases should I use to sound professional?	(To be completed after the lesson)
...		

## II. READING & ACTIVE READING ACTIVITIES

*A. You will read the text about business emailing.*

### **Business email writing (Communication)**

Besides playing a major role in individuals' personal lives, technology is indispensable in the professional world, offering convenience, reliability, and efficiency. From instant messaging apps like Slack to email platforms such as Microsoft Outlook or Gmail, and from file-sharing tools like Google Drive and Dropbox to video conferencing software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams, high-tech solutions have become standard practice in modern companies.

To fully benefit from these tools, professionals must learn to craft and send professional business emails – messages that are company-related, clearly structured, and written with appropriate tone and language. These emails are appreciated by colleagues, clients, and partners alike, as they reflect professionalism and organizational credibility.

Professional general emails are concise, carefully worded communications on various business matters. For example, an employee might send a general email via Outlook to a coworker regarding inventory updates, or use Gmail to notify a client about their order status. These messages should be clear, direct, and free of unnecessary detail, helping the recipient to quickly understand and act on the information.

Professional response emails are courteous replies to previous messages. For instance, a business manager might receive a question via Slack or email about the company's quarterly strategy. A well-structured response email should address the inquiry respectfully, providing relevant data, timelines, or resources – possibly linking to a shared document on Google Docs or a Trello card for additional context.

One of the greatest challenges in business email communication is maintaining a professional tone, particularly in stressful situations. It may be tempting, for example, to respond emotionally to a customer complaint. However, doing so can damage one's professional image and the company's reputation. Instead, a thoughtful, respectful reply – perhaps supported by a helpdesk system like Zendesk or a CRM platform – demonstrates emotional intelligence and dedication to service.

The short-term benefits of professional digital communication include increased productivity, smoother collaboration, and reduced time and resource waste. In the long term, consistently sending effective, professional emails fosters a strong reputation and promotes trust both inside and outside the organization.

*Source: adapted from <https://lingua.com/businessenglish/reading/email-writing/>*

*B. Find the appropriate expression in the text. Read the phrases in Ukrainian. Find the corresponding English phrases or expressions in the text. Write them down as they appear in the text.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Сформулювати лист  
Надіслати професійного листа  
Написати відповідь  
Зберігати офіційний тон  
Використовувати відповідну мову  
Залишатися стриманим і офіційним  
Ретельно сформульований  
Чітко структурований  
Добре структурована відповідь  
Спокійний, корисний і конструктивний тон

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Виконувати офіційну/робочу мету  
Надати відповідні дані  
Відповісти на запит  
Містити необхідну інформацію  
Повідомити клієнта / інформувати колегу  
Відповісти на скаргу

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Відображати професіоналізм  
Сформувати професійну репутацію  
Підвищити ефективність  
Сприяти довірі  
Зменшити втрати ресурсів  
Забезпечити ефективну співпрацю

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Використовувати поштову платформу  
Додати спільний документ  
Додати посилання на додаткові ресурси  
Працювати через систему підтримки клієнтів  
Спілкуватися через цифрові інструменти  
Співпрацювати через платформи для управління проектами

*C. Choose appropriate headings to the collocations above.*

- A. Collocations Related to Professional Communication Outcomes
- B. Collocations Related to Writing Style and Tone
- C. Collocations Related to Technology Integration in Communication
- D. Collocations Related to Purpose and Content of Emails

*D. Comprehension Check. Answer the questions.*

1. Why is technology considered essential in professional business communication?
2. What are some examples of tech tools mentioned in the text that support business communication?
3. What is the main purpose of a professional business email?
4. Who are the typical recipients of professional business emails?
5. What characteristics should a professional general email have?
6. In what situations would you send a professional response email?
7. What kind of tone should be maintained in business emails, even in stressful situations?
8. Why is it important to avoid unnecessary details in a business email?
9. What are some short-term and long-term benefits of writing professional emails?
10. How can emotional responses in business communication negatively impact the sender or the company?

#### **IV. POST-READING ACTIVITIES**

*A. Read the text and make a note of key points.*

##### **How to write effective business and work emails in English**

The tone of the email will be set by your relationship with the person you are writing to. Points to consider are how well you know the person, whether they work in your company or elsewhere, and which sector they work in. Here are the most important elements of an email, and how to keep your sentences short, simple and clear.

##### **1. Subject line**

Keep the subject line clear and to the point. It should highlight the main message of the email. This will grab their attention and provide a focus. An email without a subject may be ignored. An example of a good subject line would be:

*Staff meeting Agenda 10th September*

In some informal situations, it may not be necessary to write an email. You may be able to say everything in the subject line, for example,

*I'm not in the office tomorrow - please call John with any urgent issues.*

##### **2. Greetings**

The more formal way of starting emails is to use 'Dear' followed by the surname. For example,

*Dear Mr Smith*

*Dear Mrs Smith*

Some women prefer not to use 'Mrs', or you may not know if the person is married. If you are in doubt, it's always best to use 'Ms':

*Dear Ms Smith*

If you don't know the name of the person, write:

*Dear Sir/Madam*

If you know the person well, or have had some previous correspondence with them, you could use their first name:

*Dear Alex*

Other informal ways of starting an email include:

*Hello/Hi John*

*Hello/Hi (without the name)*

*John*

If you're writing to several people, for example, all the people in your department, you can use:

*Dear all (formal)*

*Hi all (informal)*

*Hi everyone (informal)*

### 3. Friendly opening

If you know the person well, or have already had some previous correspondence with them, you can start with a friendly opening such as:

*I hope you're well.*

*How are you?*

*I hope you had a nice holiday.*

*I hope everything is going well.*

### 4. Referring to previous contact

You may need to mention the time you were previously in contact with one another. Perhaps it was a phone call, a meeting or an email. You could say:

*It was lovely meeting you yesterday.*

*It was nice speaking to you on the phone last week/earlier.*

*Thanks/Thank you for your email.*

*Thank you for your enquiry.*

### 5. Apologising

Sometimes you may have to apologise if there's been a delay in your reply. In more formal emails you could say:

*I apologise/I am sorry for the delay in replying to your email.*

If there's a good reason, you could mention it:

*I apologise/I am sorry for the delay in replying to your email, but I wanted to make sure the figures were correct.*

In more informal emails, you could say:

*Sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you.*

### 6. The reason for writing the email

This will help and guide the reader. You can use formal phrases, for example:

*I'm writing in connection with...*

*I'm writing regarding....*

*I'm writing with regard to....*

*I'm writing to....*

*As discussed, I'm sending you....*

You can use informal phrases, for example:

*I wanted/would like to follow up on....*

*I wanted/would like to ask about...*

Note we say '*I wanted*', not '*I want*'. Using the past tense or the conditional will sound more polite, even in informal emails.

If you're writing an email to someone you know well, you may not need this kind of phrase and instead just ask a question, for example:

*Do you know when the internet issues will be fixed?*

*If you're writing about a specific problem, you could say:*

*I'm concerned/worried about....*

## 7. Attachments

If you have attached documents and files to the email, point this out by writing:

*Please find attached... (formal)*

*I've attached/I'm attaching...( informal)*

## 8. Making requests

You should make it clear what you want or expect from your email. Use these phrases to make your request:

*I would appreciate it if you could....(formal)*

*I would be grateful if you could.... (formal)*

*Would you be able to....? (informal)*

*Would you be able to write a short job description and send it back to me as soon as you can? (informal)*

*(Please) Could/Can you(please) ...? (formal)*

*Could you send me the link when you have a moment? (informal)*

If you want to add urgency to your request, you could introduce a deadline:

*Could you please send me the report by Friday at the latest?*

*I would appreciate it if you could send me the report by Friday at the latest.*

## 9. Replying to a request

You could use the following phrases when replying to a request. These expressions are more common in more formal emails:

*As requested, I have attached the document with the details.*

If you have not been able to carry out the request, you can say:

*Unfortunately/I'm afraid I don't have the information you asked for at the moment.*

In this situation, give some reassurance that you might be able to fulfil the request at some point in the future. For example:

*As soon as we have an update, I will let you know.*

## 10. Making arrangements

You may need to make arrangements in an email, such as meetings, appointments or video calls:

*I was wondering if you were/would be available next week.*  
*Would Tuesday suit you?*  
*Would Tuesday work for you?*  
*Would Tuesday be suitable?*  
*I'm afraid I'm not available/free on Tuesday. Would Wednesday work?*

#### 11. Closing the email

This is a good way of indicating that you are approaching the end of the email.

In a more formal email, you could use:

*Please do not hesitate to contact us/me with any further queries.*

*Contact us if you have any queries about the contract.*

*We are always available to answer your queries.*

*If you need/require any further information, please do not hesitate/please feel free to contact us/me.*

*I look forward to hearing from you/seeing you next week/meeting you soon.*

*I look forward to our meeting tomorrow.*

In more informal emails, you might say:

*Let me know if you have any questions.*

*Let me know if you need anything else.*

*Just get in touch if you have any questions/if you need anything else.*

#### 12. Signing off

Again, this depends on who you're writing to. The more formal expressions are:

*Kind regards*

*Best wishes*

With people you know well, you can use:

*Best*

*Thanks*

*All the best*

Of course, always write your name afterwards.

'*Yours sincerely*' and '*Yours faithfully*' are only used when the content of the letter is impersonal, very formal or when you do not know the name of the person.

Use '*Yours sincerely*' when you know the name of the person you're writing to.

Use '*Yours faithfully*' when you don't know the name of the person.

#### 13. Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms can save time, but they can make the email sound informal or the recipient may not understand them.

There are some abbreviations which are very common and part of everyday written communication, so these would be safe to use in any type of email, such as 'pm' or 'am'.

Others are also common, but are only used in informal emails, for example, 'eg' (for example), 'BTW' (by the way), 'FYI' (for your information), or 'Re' (regarding).



There are some rarer abbreviations but it is best not to use them, even in informal emails. These include 'COB' (close of business), 'IMO' (in my opinion) or 'NRN' (no reply necessary).

#### 14. Before you click 'Send'

Proofread and check your email for grammar, spelling mistakes and any words you are unsure about, including the correct spelling of the recipient's name. After all, you want to create a good impression and sound professional!

Be aware that there are some differences between British English and American English spelling. For example, words such as 'favour', 'colour' and 'centre' are spelled 'favor', 'color' and 'center' in the US.

To check punctuation, reading your email aloud can be effective. This will help you decide where you might need to add or remove marks or break up long sentences for clarity.

If you have a really complex issue to discuss, it may be easier to pick up the phone and talk to someone instead of sending an email, then follow up with a summary email afterwards so that everyone has a record of the conversation.

Source: <https://www.londonschool.com/blog/how-write-effective-business-and-work-emails-english/>

*B. Fill in each section with appropriate words, phrases, or full sentences based on the text above. Use formal or informal language depending on the context.*

1. Subject Line ➡ (Write a short, clear subject that highlights the main message)

☐ Example: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Greeting / Salutation ➡ (Choose a formal or informal greeting depending on the recipient)

☐ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Friendly Opening (Optional) ➡ (Use when you know the person well or to start positively)

☐ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Referring to Previous Contact ➡ (Mention previous email, meeting, or call)

☐ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Stating the Purpose ➡ (State why you're writing)

☐ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Making a Request ➡ (Ask politely for something)

☐ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Mentioning Attachments (if any) ➡ (Say what you've attached)

□ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Closing Statement ➡ (End your message in a professional and polite way)

□ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Sign-Off ➡ (Choose an appropriate sign-off)

□ Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

*C. You are watching the YouTube video about Business English Writing. Letters and Email. After watching the video, answer the following questions: (1) "What should you think about when you start and end a business letter or email?", (2) "What are some common mistakes people might make when writing business letters?", (3) "Why is it important to avoid mistakes in professional emails?"*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ralOdKh2eAw>

#### *D. Comprehension Questions*

1. What are the three main ways to begin a business email, and how does the choice depend on your relationship with the recipient?
2. Why is it a mistake to write "Dear Mr. David" in a business email or letter?
3. What closing phrases are considered professional for ending a business email in British English?
4. When should you use "Dear Sir/Madam" and how should you end such a letter?
5. In what situation would you use the phrase "To whom it may concern" at the beginning of a letter?

#### *E. Fill in the gap with appropriate phrases from the box.*

Kind regards	Dear Sir/Madam	Yours sincerely	Best wishes
To Whom It May Concern	Dear Mr. Jones	Hi Clare	Yours faithfully
Cheers	Bye		

1. If you don't know the name of the recipient, start with: \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If you're addressing someone formally by their full title and surname, you might write: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. To end a formal letter to someone whose name you know, use: \_\_\_\_\_.
4. When the recipient is unknown, the appropriate closing is: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A casual but still polite ending in British English is: \_\_\_\_\_.
6. When writing a reference letter for broad use, begin with: \_\_\_\_\_.
7. To start an email to a colleague you know well, write: \_\_\_\_\_.
8. A neutral and respectful way to address a woman, regardless of marital status, is: \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A friendly yet semi-formal way to close an email is: \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Avoid saying \_\_\_\_\_ at the end of a business email, as it appears too informal.

*F. There are some additional resources that can be useful for riching your vocabulary about Business Letters and Emails.*

<https://english-at-home.com/business/writing-a-business-letter/>

<https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/writing-practice/writing-emails-letters/business-letters-emails/61044>

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/business-english/english-emails>

*D. Re-write an inappropriately informal business letter in a more appropriate, formal style.*

Fine Foods Ltd.  
10 Bridge Street  
London  
SW10 5TG

Hello Mr. Roger Jones:

I got the letter you sent on 1<sup>st</sup> September, and the stuff about the stock control system you make. It sounds great for us, but I want to check some things before we buy it. You said the system is bang up-to-date, but what happens if you update it again soon? Do we get money off the new one? You said it takes 3 weeks to install the system – that's too long! Can't you do it any quicker? Hope you can reply soon, we're in a bit of a hurry.

Thanks,

Janet Brown

*E. Pick up one situation below and write the business letter on your own.*

*Situation 1:* You are the Head of Human Resources at an international cosmetics company. You have been in touch with an IT Training company about training for some of your staff. You have now received information about the training, but need to change some of the details. With a partner, think of what kind of changes you might need to make (for example, the number of people taking the training course). Now choose the appropriate phrases and expressions for writing the letter. Write the letter with your partner.

*Situation 2:* You are organising a conference for your company's sales representatives from all over the country. You have already booked the hotel where the conference will be held and the sales reps will stay, and have just received a letter of

confirmation. However, you need to make some changes to the arrangements. With a partner, think of what kind of changes you might need to make (for example, the number of hotel rooms you need). Now choose the appropriate phrases and expressions for writing the letter. Write the letter with your partner.