

BUSINESS ENGLISH

How to write the perfect English E-mail – Part 1

di Tom Roper



Welcome back to your weekly serving of English! According to research, in 2022 there are around 333.2 billion emails sent every day which means I'm fairly confident every single one of you has sent an email by now and I'm also sure that nearly all of you have had that slight **panic** as you clicked "send" hoping that you haven't made a horrific mistake. So over the next few parts, we are going to take a look at how to **write** and send the **perfect email** that will fill you with confidence and assure the reader or recipient you know exactly what you are doing.

Let's start at the very beginning of every email: **the subject line**.

Subject lines can mean **success** or failure for some people which means there is a minimum standard to achieve every time you fill out the little white space. Simplistic lines with vague information such as a name can not only lead to the email being **lost** in the system but sometimes even end up in the **Spam** box!

Subject lines are also particularly important if you are writing to someone for the **first time**, the recipient doesn't know who you are and can only judge based on your **opening line**. So how can we make it more **effective**? Be clear, **direct** and try to describe the content of your email, don't worry about using the entire subject line space. Here are some good examples:

- [Required Action] For example Weekly Manager Meeting
- [NAME OF CONTACT] advised me to get in touch with you
- Request for [NAME OF DOCUMENT/REQUEST]
- I will be in your city next Wednesday – are you available?
- [Reminder] Feedback Form to Complete | Will take 5 Minutes

If you are sending a **promotional** email with no previous communication, try to avoid **misleading** or deceptive subjects such as:

- Re:
- Fwd:
- Urgent

Avoiding these titles at the first contact will prevent the recipient from feeling **tricked** or cheated and should stop the email from finishing in the **Spam** or Junk folder.

The next step is the **greeting** which can also be a potentially difficult area.

You should start with an **appropriate** greeting which can be divided into two parts: the **salutation** and the **opening** phrase.

The correct salutation **depends** considerably on the situation. If this is a **formal** communication to an institution, for example, the ideal beginning would be "**Dear [X]**". Don't forget, if you know your recipient is **male** and you really need to use it then choose "**Mr + Surname**" whereas if your recipient is female, **avoid** the Miss/Mrs controversy and choose a neutral "**Ms. + Surname**".

If this email is going to someone we know or someone with whom you have a casual relation with, a simple "**Hi + Name**" or "**Hello + Name**" is completely fine.

You can also use "**To whom it may concern**" when you are sending the email to a group of different people or if you are **unsure** as to who will be reading the message.

Try where possible to avoid using **gendered** or **non-neutral** or inclusive terms such as "Hi guys" or Mr/Mrs/Miss (unless you are very confident) to prevent any **offence** from being taken.

Some good examples of salutations could be:

- Hi Team
- Good Morning / Afternoon / Evening
- [Name]
- Hey (for a very informal approach)

Once we have written the salutation we can get on with the actual email.

For the following part, we need to keep the **attention** of the reader **focused** on what you **need** so we try to explain why we are sending this message. If this is a **promotional** email or to someone that you are writing to for the first time, try to open with something that you know will interest the reader.

If you have any information about the receiver this is the place to insert it so you can help to build **rapport** and make sure you get your message across. On the other hand, if this is just a **communication** to a colleague here is where we put the **reason** for our email. Nobody has the

time or patience to try to guess what an email is about so the sooner we **communicate** the reason the less chance we have of **losing** the person's interest.

So this is the first part of writing an effective email, but there are many more for us to look at! Keep with us as we will take a look at the second and **final** part in next week's article! Remember, if you have any **requests** write them in the comments or get in touch if there's something, in particular, you would like to see here or be assisted with.