

How to write emails

Symbols:



= normal, standard, is always possible.



= Particularly friendly, respectively informal



= Particularly formal: rather used in business letters or faxes.

Salutation



Dear Janet This is still normal, and nice. Use it.



Hi for a friend

Janet some people use this: it's a bit short, we think
"Hello Janet" is not really English.

British people sometimes use a comma:

Dear Janet,
Janet,

Americans use a comma or a colon (:). So do anything you want.



Dear All is nice, if you're writing to several people together.

And one more possibility: nothing. No "Dear...", no name. Just start the message.
It's not very friendly, though. Maybe do this for simple answers to simple questions.

Thank you ...

Thanks for...
...the information
...your comments
...your work on the
...project
...the report

Letters used to begin:

Thank you for your letter of 12 June...

This was a way of saying: "We have received your letter". You don't need to do this with emails, but it's still nice to begin by thanking for something, if you can.

But "Thanks for your email" is a bit of a waste of time.

You received some news from a friend ...



Nice to hear from you again.

Don't say this if you met the person yesterday!



Good to hear from you.

We already know each other ...

We met at the conference in March last year.
We spoke when you visited us in...

Say this only if you need a reminder (rappel).

I have to introduce myself ...

I work in the department at
(*company*)
I'm working on the ... project.
I'm responsible for ...

In English, say what you do, not what you are.
(Not: "I am assistant technical manager....".)

"responsible for" = "responsable de"

I have a question:



Could you tell me...

Write a phrase like this at the beginning of your first question.



Could you let me know...

Problem: this makes the grammar more difficult. If you write something before the question word (how, what, when, who etc.), you don't use a question word order after the question word. So:

I'm writing to ask...

Could you tell me when you will arrive...

Not: "...when will you arrive"

I'd like to know what the part costs.

Not: "...what does the part cost"

The grammar of questions in English is not easy. If you are not sure, here is an easy way to ask for information:

Could you tell me:

the length of the part ...

the price of...

the time of the meeting

your address in...

etc.

or "I'd like to know:", "I need to know:",

"Could you let me know:" etc.

I have to give you the following information:

Just give the information!

In an email, don't say anything like "I have the following to report" or "Here is the information which you asked for".

If you want, you can start with:

FYI = "for your information". Don't write this if you are **answering** a question.

If you have good or bad news:

Good news



I'm pleased to say that we...

I'm happy to say that we...



Good news! We have....



In a formal communication, for example to clients, you could say:

I am pleased to be able to inform you that we have...

Bad news



I'm afraid (that) the..

I'm sorry to say (that) the...

Say "I'm afraid" before anything that the person whom you are writing to doesn't want to hear.



If the news is very, very bad, here is a formal way of giving it:

I am sorry to have to inform you that we are forced to terminate your employment.

Please do what follows:

For simple, routine things, just say:

Please

Please send your expense (*coûts*) sheets to Janet in the Munich office.

But "please" is no good if you want more.

The more you want, the longer the phrase (*expression*) you need:

Could you...

Could you send me a copy of the contract?

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| ✓ | Could you possibly... | Could you possibly check the figures again? |
| ✓ | Do you think you could... | Do you think you could finish the report by Friday? |
| ☹️ | I wonder if you could... | |
| ☹️ | I would be grateful if you could... | |

I would like (I'd like)...

| | | |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| | Easy. "Could" is always O.K.: | |
| ✓ | Could I... | (I want to do something) |
| ✓ | Could you.... | (Could you do something?) |
| | Americans use " May I " more than "Could I": | |
| | May I... | May I take a day off Friday? |
| | Be careful! "J'aimerais" is not "I like", but " I'd like ": | |
| 😊 | If it's all right with you, I'd like to go... | |

The answer is: Yes, no problem.

| | |
|----|---------------------------------|
| | That's fine. |
| ✓ | No problem. |
| 😊 | Sure, go ahead. |
| | Of course you can... |
| | If you're the boss: |
| ☹️ | You have my authorisation to... |

The answer is: this is not possible.

Don't write "no"! Just say the problem:
 The problem is, we...
 Unfortunately, at the moment...
 I'm afraid (that)...
If it's not already clear that you are saying "no", you can add something like:
 So I'm afraid it's not possibleat the moment...
 So I have to say you can't, I'm afraid.

Complaints

| | |
|---|--|
| | Maybe you want a fight with the person you are writing to. |
| | If not, start like this: |
| ✓ | I'm afraid (that)... not: "I'm afraid, but..." |
| | Unfortunately |
| | Then don't be too direct: sound a bit uncertain: |
| | There seems to be a problem with the |
| | There may be a misunderstanding about |
| | Suggest a solution if you can: |
| | Could you recheck the figures? |
| | Could you send us a replacement by courier? |
| | Can we agree on a target of a 20% improvement by the end of the month? |

If you send a copy of the email to the person's boss, it's polite to say so:
I'm sending a copy of this message to for information.

Apology (excuse)

Vocabulary first: S'excuser: to **apologise** (GB) or to **apologize** (USA)
excuse: an **apology**

Now the rules: Be careful: **apologise**: s'excuser; **apologies**: excuses
1. Apologise immediately
2. Give a reason (lie, if it helps)
3. Suggest action
4. Apologise again.

1. Apologise immediately



I'm sorry that we...



Sorry about the...



I must apologise for...

Please accept our apologies for...

2. Give a reason



This was unavoidably due to...

There was a hold-up in our department

"hold-up" = retard



Our suppliers let us down

3. Suggest action

I'm sending you the new figures

4. Apologise again

Sorry again



I'm sorry about all the trouble you've had.

Isn't that nice?

You can reach me

You can reach me...

or "You can get in touch with me..."

... on my mobile on +49 89 123.....

... on my pager

... by calling my secretary on ...

... at home on ...

You can fax me on...

It may be better to phone. I'm in the office from ... to ...



This is not a "natel".

It's a "mobile phone" or "my mobile".

Some people (in America) also say "cell phone" or "cellular phone".

End of the email

It's OK to end an email with:



(Nothing, just your name)

If you have a good reason, you can end with one of these phrases. They are all common in letters and faxes:



Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any more information.



I hope this information will be helpful.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Grammar: you must use "...forward to -ing", not "forward to hear" etc. Like this:

Looking forward to meeting you.
Looking forward to seeing you next week.
Looking forward to talking to you at the conference.

Finally, either **nothing** or:

Thanks



See you

Best regards

Best wishes

(more common in Britain)



Bye



Love,

for close personal friends, not just lovers!

Signature



It's usual in English-speaking countries to sign emails with just your first name. This doesn't mean "I want to be your friend". It just means "We are working together".

If you need to give details of your job title, department, etc., put them after your name.

Thanks for your help.

Janet

Ms. Janet Smith
Motivation Manager
Dept JFDI

Easy, huh?