

Unit 1: Writing emails

SUMMARY

You can use this summary to guide the learning objectives and target setting for your class.

Can-do statements:

By the end of this unit, students will be able to say:

- I can understand the difference between formal, semi-formal and informal emails.
- I can adjust my writing style according to the situation.
- I can use phrasal verbs appropriately.

Skill focus

Writing informal emails:

Part A 1 4, Part B 3, Get writing 1 3

Writing semi-formal emails:

Part B 1 2, Get writing 2

Writing formal emails:

Part A 3, Part B 2 3

Vocabulary

Formal email phrases: *I would be grateful if ..., I am writing to enquire about ..., I am writing on behalf of ..., Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions, With regard to ..., I wonder if you could ..., I trust this finds you well, Please accept my apologies. I look forward to hearing from you*

Informal email phrases: *I'm off to ..., dead handy, fancy ...? awesome, bang in the middle of ..., check out, do up, be put out*

Usage

Phrasal verbs for informality

In class, write the following questions on the board:

- Is the email addressed to you personally, or is it a circular?
- What is the email about?
- Is it formal or informal?
- Does it require a response?

Put students into groups of six. Hand out one email from the photocopiable sheet to each student and tell them they have 30 seconds to skim the email. Then they must turn the email upside down and note down the answers to the questions on the board. Give them two or three minutes to do this. Then tell them to repeat the activity with the other five emails. Allow students to share their ideas with their group before feeding back ideas as a whole class. Ask students how carefully they would read each email.

(Answers: **1** circular, an anniversary celebration, semi-formal, response optional **2** personal, visit from sister, informal, response required **3** personal, a job offer, formal, response required **4** circular (spam), formal, no response required **5** personal, renewal of club membership, informal, no response required **6** personal, re-send document and arrange a lift, informal, response required)

Using Looking closely

- Ask students to complete *Exercise 1*. Remind them to look at the salutations and endings of the emails to gauge how well the writers and recipients know each other.
- While reading, ask students to make notes on what they learn about the people / places mentioned in each email.

(Answers: **1** Marta: friend of Katie, interested in visiting Spain; Katie: lives in Spain, will be visiting London for 6 weeks; Katie's flat: in the middle of town, convenient, recently done up; Barcelona: good public transport **2** Sara: lives in Edinburgh, interested in visiting Amsterdam, interested in art; Rik: lives in Amsterdam; interested in visiting Edinburgh; has a pet dog; Rik's flat: walking distance from shops and cafes; tram stop outside; in need of refurbishment; The Jordaan: beautiful part of Amsterdam)

- Brainstorm some features of formal, informal and semi-formal emails. Then compare students' ideas with the information in the *Language note* on page 9.

CLASSROOM EXTENSION IDEAS

You can use some or all of these ideas to check and enhance your students' understanding as they work their way through *Unit 1 of Writing B2+ Upper Intermediate* in class.

Using Getting started

- Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs. Get one or two volunteers to tell the class about their partner.
- Before the class, copy the photocopiable sheet *Email samples*. You will need just one copy for each group of six students. Cut out the email samples along the dotted lines.

Using Language focus

1. Ask students to complete *Exercise 1*. Take a class vote on whether the emails are formal, informal, or something in between. Discuss the words and phrases your students underline as a class.
2. Tell students to take three pages in their vocabulary books, and label them *Formal emails*, *Informal emails* and *Semi-formal emails*. Ask students to find phrases from the sample emails and write them on the appropriate page in their books. They can refer to *Appendix 1* on page 88.
3. Complete *Exercise 2*. Ask students to write their own example sentences using the informal phrases. Discuss some ideas as a class.
4. Complete *Exercise 3*. Students can compare their sentences with a partner. For each one, ask them to check that their sentences are grammatically accurate and mean the same as the original sentence.
5. Tell students to act out a telephone conversation between Marta and Katie in which Katie invites Marta to stay at her flat. Before doing so, they should pick out at least five words or phrases from Katie's email to use in the conversation. They can then alter and personalize the dialogue to make it true for them.
6. Complete *Exercise 4* and check answers. Then students can act out a semi-formal telephone conversation in the same way as the one in *Step 5*.
7. As homework, students can either rewrite Marta's email in a more formal tone or rewrite Rik's email in a less formal tone. They should use phrases from the unit.

Using the Language note

1. Keep a record of phrasal verbs that the class encounter. Students should write them on slips of paper with the meaning or a formal equivalent on the reverse side. These can be kept in a box in the classroom. When you have a few spare minutes at the end of a lesson, you can use these for quick pairwork activities, such as:
 - One student reads the meaning / formal equivalent, the other tries to remember the phrasal verb.
 - Students take turns to take a slip of paper and make a sentence using the phrasal verb.
 - Students test each other with 'multiple choice' questions, e.g.
 Student A: Which phrasal verb means *refurbish*: *do up*, *do out* or *do away*?
 Student B: *Do up*
 - Students take five slips of paper from the box and use the phrasal verbs to create gapfill exercises to test their partner.
2. You can use the photocopiable sheet *Phrasal verbs in informal emails* at this point. Before class, cut out all the

sentences and pairs of phrasal verbs so that they are on separate slips of paper. In pairs, students match the sentences with the pairs of phrasal verbs. Then students take half of the sentences. They rewrite them, putting some phrasal verbs in the right place, and some in the wrong place. Students show their sentences to their partner, who says if the sentence is correct or not, and corrects it if necessary.

Using Looking closely

1. Complete *Exercise 1*. Then brainstorm other types of emails when a formal tone might be appropriate.
(Suggested answer: *business email or other official correspondence*)
2. Use this comprehension exercise to check understanding of the email. Ask students to list what they learn in the email about Dr Martin (Answer: *Will deliver lectures and workshops at a summer school in July, is an expert in his / her subject*) and Professor Cheng Li. (Answer: *Works at a university, is Dr Martin's contact in case he needs further information*)

Using Language focus

1. Complete *Exercise 1*. Tell students to add these phrases to the pages they made in their vocabulary notebook.
2. Refer students to *Appendix 1* on page 88. Tell them to find any other phrases which have the same function as the extracts in *Exercise 1*.
3. Students complete *Exercise 2*.
4. Discuss students' answers for *Exercise 2*. Then ask students to rewrite Professor Cheng Li's email as an informal or semi-formal email as homework. Read out the *Useful tips* on page 11 and encourage students to incorporate these ideas into their email.
5. Complete *Exercise 3*. You could play the following game. Put students into groups of four. Each student takes one question and copies it onto a slip of paper. They then write the answer on the back. Monitor to check that all students have the correct answers. Each student then tests the other students in their group by showing them the question, and checking they give the correct answer.
6. Write keywords from the email and *Exercises 1–3* on slips of paper, for example: *further, wonder, regard, hesitate, grateful, enquire, behalf, delighted*. A number of activities can be done with these:
 - Students take turns to take a slip of paper. They must make a sentence using this word.
 - Students take a slip of paper and keep it secret. They say a sentence (or read one from the book), leaving out the word on their slip of paper. Their partner must try to guess the missing word.

Using *Get writing*

1. Before starting these exercises, encourage students to look back over the unit, the phrases they have written in their vocabulary books and the *Useful tips* box for ideas on how best to write an informal email.
2. Allow students to complete *Exercise 1* alone. Set a time limit. After this, students can compare their emails, sentence-by-sentence in small groups. Whose email sounds most informal? Tell students to collate their ideas to create one informal email. Encourage them to peer-check for accuracy.
3. There are a number of ways you can carry out *Exercises 2* and *3*:
 - Put students into small groups. Tell students to write the first sentence of the email. Then they should pass their paper on to the next student who reads the first student's sentence, corrects it if necessary and adds another sentence. They continue until the email is complete.
 - Ask two students to work together to write an email, peer-checking for accuracy and appropriate tone.
 - Set one or both exercises as a timed test.
 - Write a very brief, inaccurate email with an inappropriate tone yourself. Tell students to use your email as a base and improve it.

Optional extension work

This activity uses all four skills:

1. Put students into pairs. Students take turns to interview each other about their homes and neighbourhoods. In particular, they should pay attention to what facilities are available for guests. They should make notes on their partner's answers.
2. Students then write an email on their partner's behalf, inviting someone to stay. They should include details taken from their notes.
3. Partners exchange notes and check that the information in them is accurate.

Using *Next steps*

If students do not have any emails in English, use the photocopiable sheet *Email samples*. Ask students to scan the emails for useful phrases to add to their vocabulary books. You can bring in your own emails too, if you have some you don't mind sharing.

PHOTOCOPIABLES

Email samples

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>1</p> <p>Dear Cardiff Geology graduates,</p> <p>We hope you will be able to join us for the 100 Years of Geology@Cardiff Anniversary Celebrations 21-22 July</p> <p>WE ARE NOW OPEN FOR BOOKINGS. A booking form and an updated programme for the weekend are attached to this email. Timings of the different events are subject to final confirmation, but we don't expect them to change.</p> <p>We look forward to seeing you in July!</p> <p>With best wishes from the Geology staff</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Hey Kathy,</p> <p>How are you doing?</p> <p>Well guess what!!!! I'm doing a show in Bristol on St Patrick's weekend - Saturday 15th March - that's the weekend we were gonna meet up anyway!!!! So do you wanna come? It should be a great show with lots of dancing and Irish music, and is perfect for kids too. If we're lucky, I might be able to get some free tickets. We could invite Mum and Dad too, if you're happy to have them staying at your place. What do you say?</p> <p>Really hope you can come!!!!</p> <p>Lots of love Jess xxxxx</p> |
| <p>3</p> <p>Dear Ms Harper,</p> <p>Thank you very much for coming in to our offices a few days ago to attend a job interview. We are pleased to tell you that we would like to offer you the job.</p> <p>We understand that you need to give your company one month's notice, so, with this in mind, can I suggest a start date of 5th April?</p> <p>If you would like to accept the job, we'd appreciate it if you could sign the contract attached to this email and return it within the next seven working days.</p> <p>Thank you once again, and we look forward to you joining us at Pebbles Inc.</p> <p>Best regards, Joanne Morton Human Resources</p> | <p>4</p> <p>Dear friend,</p> <p>I know that this mail will come to you as a surprise. I am the bill and exchange manager at the National Bank. A customer died along with his next of kin in an air crash three years ago and since then, his estate, a sum of \$22.5 million, has lain dormant in our bank. We want to release the money to you as the nearest person to our deceased customer and we need your urgent assistance in transferring the sum immediately to your account.</p> <p>Upon receipt of your full bank details including sort code, account number and PIN, I will release 40% of the above mentioned sum.</p> <p>Looking forward to your reply, Mr J Martin</p> |
| <p>5</p> <p>Hi,</p> <p>Thanks for renewing your membership to the Adventure Sports Club. I have added you to our e-mail distribution list so we can keep you updated with details of upcoming events. Alternatively you can click on the 'Events List' on the club website homepage to see what's coming up.</p> <p>This is a non-profit club and is entirely run by volunteers, so what you get out very much depends on what you put in. To get the most out of the club, come along to meetings, express what you want to do and take part! The events list tends to be based on what members at the meetings want to do, so if you want to do anything in particular, make sure you come along. If you have any questions please email me. Otherwise I look forward to seeing you at an event soon.</p> <p>Kindest Regards, Neil</p> | <p>6</p> <p>Hey Jack,</p> <p>Can you send the Quality Control doc to me again? I seem to have deleted it from my inbox.</p> <p>On another note, do you think you could give me a lift to the station after work today and tomorrow? My car's at the garage. There's a train at 5.20, but I'll never make it if I walk and the next one isn't for nearly an hour after that. Would really appreciate it mate!</p> <p>Al</p> |

PHOTOCOPIABLES**Phrasal verbs in informal emails**

Rewrite the extracts from emails in a more informal way. Use the phrasal verbs in bold.

1. I'm afraid I haven't been able to complete the report you requested because I've had a number of other tasks to complete.
get round to / tied up

2. I have noticed a few problems with your quality control report. Please would you come to my office at your earliest convenience so that I can review the correct procedure with you.
drop by / go over

3. To be considered for the post, please submit your application form before 14th April, otherwise your application will automatically be rejected.
send in / turn down

4. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I won't be able to assist you in your project after all.
let down / help out

5. Our supplies of photocopier ink are low. Could you order some more please? Try different stores for the lowest prices.
run out of / shop around

6. At the meeting, Pam mentioned that the heating problem still hasn't been resolved.
point out / sort out

7. The management have investigated the possibility of you moving from Human Resources to Finance, but due to staff shortages, we require you to remain in your current position for the time being.
look into / stick to

8. James isn't available to assemble the equipment for the presentation. Would you be able to assemble it for us?
set up / put together

PHOTOCOPIABLES

Phrasal verbs in informal emails – Suggested answers

1. Sorry, I haven't got round to finishing off the report you asked for, because I've been a bit tied up.
2. There are a few problems with your quality control report. Can you drop by some time, and I'll go over the correct procedure with you?
3. If you want to apply for the job, you need to send in your application form before 14th April, otherwise you'll automatically be turned down.
4. I'm sorry to let you down, but I can't help you out with your project after all.
5. We're running out of photocopier ink. Can you order some more please? Shop around for the lowest prices.
6. At the meeting, Pam pointed out that the heating problem still hasn't been sorted out.
7. We looked into the possibility of you moving from Human Resources to Finance, but we're short of staff at the moment, so could you stick to your current position for the time being?
8. James isn't free to set up the equipment for the presentation. Can you put it together for us please?