

Emailing by Olya Sergeeva

Age: Adults
Level: Intermediate +
Time: 1 hour 40 minutes
Objective: to practise writing work-related emails
Key skills: writing
Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student;
 one copy of the three emails on the Emails sheet, cut up, per student (optional)

Overview

A lot of English-language learners keep their first-language emailing style when emailing in English. For example, they might leave out the opening line that explains what the email is about, comments in which they explain the reasons for their actions or the concluding line that says what they or the recipient should do next. As a result, the reader might find it difficult to follow the email.

In this lesson, learners will improve their ability to write work-related emails. They will achieve this by:

- analyzing and learning to use the correct email structure to help the reader follow the email easily;
- learning a range of email-related expressions;
- raising their awareness of the need to notice and copy the emailing conventions of their company.

Preparation

Cut up the emails on the emails sheet.

Procedure

Warmer – 5 mins

Ask the learners what means of communication they use at work. Say that today's lesson will focus on some useful language for emailing. Put the learners in pairs or small groups, hand out the worksheets and do the warmer.

Task 1 – 5 mins

The learners read the emails and answer the questions. Allow a minute to compare the answers in pairs and then check as a class.

Key:

1. a. *email C*; b. *email B*; c. *email A*
2. *email A – post the docs in a Dropbox folder; email B – provide feedback*

3. *email B – send links; email C – get back to me as soon as you can*

Task 2a – 4 mins

Ask the learners to cover the emails in task 1. Hand out one cut-up copy of email A (from the Emails sheet) to each learner. If you haven't had the chance to cut up the emails, use task 2a on the worksheet instead. While the learners are doing the task, monitor and collect examples of alternative sentence order in the learners' answers, to discuss after task b.

Task 2b – 6 mins

After the learners compare their answers to task 2a in pairs, as a class, discuss the examples you collected during task 2a.

Task 2c – 5 mins

The learners read email A again and fill out the first column in the table. Tell them that the numbers in the first column of the table refer to the section numbers in the email. Allow time for them to compare answers in pairs before going through the answers as a class.

Key:

email A

- 1 *greeting*
- 2 *topic*
- 3 *a comment to make the reader feel better*
- 4 *what the writer will do next*
- 5 *reason why*
- 6 *what the recipient should do next*
- 7 *signing off*
- 8 *name*

Task 3 – 10 mins

Repeat tasks 2a, b and c for Email B.

Key:

email B

- 1 *greeting*
- 2 *topic*
- 3 *reason why*
- 4 *what the recipient should do next*
- 5 *the reason why*
- 6 *what the writer will do next*
- 7 *signing off*

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If time permits, you could also repeat the procedure for email C.

Key:

- email C
- 1 greeting
- 2 topic
- 3 what the recipient should do next
- 4 reason why
- 5 signing off

Task 4a – 5 mins

Allow 3 minutes to discuss the question in pairs. Elicit and board the learners' ideas.

Task 4b – 10 mins

Refer the learners to the Improve your writing box. The learners compare their ideas with the tips in the box.

Follow-up

Tell the learners that some nationalities have emailing conventions that are different from the English emailing conventions and so they tend to leave out some parts of the email structure. Ask the learners which parts they would tend to leave out. Discuss what effect this might have on the reader. At the end, ask the learners if their emailing conventions or the emailing conventions in their country are different from the English emailing conventions.

Key (suggested answers):

Some learners or nationalities ...

- don't include the expected or promised action when they think it's clear;
Possible effect: the recipient might not find what they need to do quickly and might not do it; the recipient might think the writer is rude, for example if they give their opinion but don't ask for feedback at the end of the email.
- don't include comments (why something happens or is needed);
Possible effect: the recipient might think that the writer is rude, especially if the writer asks the recipient to do something.
- don't give a reason why they are writing.
Possible effect: the recipient might find it difficult to understand the email, especially if it's long; they might even decide not to read it.

Task 5a – 10 mins

Learners analyze key emailing language in emails A, B and C. Column 2 of the table contains some example phrases.

Key:

beginning and ending		
1.	hello	hi team; hi Dan
2.	I'm sending you	here are
3.	bye	thanks
asking the reader to do something		
4.	could you	would you please
reasons		
5.	in order to	this will; that way, the guys can
6.	because	as
other useful expressions		
7.	I quoted your email and inserted my comments	inline below
8.	today or tomorrow morning	in the morning latest
9.	as fast as possible / urgently	as soon as you can
10.	reply	get back to me

Task 5b – 5 mins

Learners read the Improve your writing box and brainstorm what other emailing conventions may be different in different companies.

Key (suggested answers):

the level of formality; signing off and signatures; the use of abbreviations, e.g. MFU (meeting follow-up); replying with comments inline or as a plain text

Task 6a (optional) – 5 mins

The aim of the task is to give the learners a list of useful opening and closing lines, which they could use for reference when writing emails at work. The learners do the task in pairs and then feed back to the whole class.

Key:

1.	Please see attached and below the rough plan I put together.	O
2.	Let me know what you think.	C
3.	Thanks for letting me know about this issue.	O

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4.	<i>I'm afraid I've run into a few issues so it looks like I won't be able to finish the functionality today.</i>	O
5.	<i>Hope this helps. Any questions on details, please check with John.</i>	C
6.	<i>Please review and send us your feedback by EOD Monday, 15 June.</i>	C
7.	<i>Please let me know if this works for you.</i>	C
8.	<i>Thanks for the update.</i>	O
9.	<i>I'll keep you updated.</i>	C
10.	<i>Just a quick email to remind you to fill out this form before our meeting on Tuesday: [link].</i>	O

Task 6b (optional) – 5 mins

Model one or two examples as a class before pairing up the learners.

Task 7a – 10 mins

Go through the situation and email with the class. Then, allow about 5 minutes for the learners to write their replies. While they're writing, monitor and help them to self-correct mistakes in emailing expressions. When they have finished, get them to read the Progress check box and update their work as necessary.

Task 7b – 10 mins

Learners compare their emails in pairs and discuss what effect they would have on the reader.

Homework task

Elicit from the learners and board what types of work emails they get (for example, requests for information and meeting follow-ups). Ask the learners to choose a typical email type that they get at work and write the email and a reply to it using what they have learnt in this lesson.

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Warmer

Discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Do you get a lot of emails? How soon do you normally reply to them?
2. In what languages do you write emails? Is it easier for you to write emails in your mother tongue or in English?
3. Do you ever check work email from home or while you're on holiday? Do you think this is a good idea?

Task 1

Read the emails below and answer the questions. Compare your answers with a partner.

1. Which email ...
 - a. ... replies to an email?
 - b. ... replies to a meeting invitation?
 - c. ... starts a new thread?
2. In which emails does the writer promise to do something? What?
3. In which emails does the writer ask the email recipients to do something? What?

A

Subject Today's meeting

From: joan@business.com

Hi team, (1)

Here are the docs that will be presented in today's meeting: <http://goo.gl/aaaaa>. (2) It's a lot but this is everything.(3)

I will also be posting an All docs folder on Dropbox and will be sharing with the team.(4) This will keep all docs up to date in one location for easy reference.(5) Expect an email on this soon.(6)

Thanks, (7)

Joan (8)

B

New email

Hi Dan, (1)

Sorry, we really can't attend today.(2) I have to attend a release schedule meeting with Good Old Project, and John and Kate are working out urgent data requirements with ACME as key folks will be away tomorrow and we need to unblock the team.(3)

Would you please send us the links to Wireframes and Designs today, to this group?(4) That way, the guys can review and provide feedback tomorrow, before the ACME meeting in the afternoon?(5)

We'll try to provide our feedback in the morning latest.(6)

Thanks. (7)

send A

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c

To: tom@company.org

From: me@mybusinessmail.com

Subject: Feedback

Thanks for the feedback, Tom. (1)

I am generally on board with the approach that you have outlined. I just have a few questions/
comments inline below.(2) Please get back to me, guys, as soon as you can.(3)

It is important that we finalize this because we must begin development of this on Monday.(4)

Thanks. (5)

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EMAIL STRUCTURE

Task 2

a. Cover email A in task 1. Put these sentences in the correct order. Compare with a partner.

order

Joan

Hi team,

Expect an email on this soon.

This will keep all docs up to date in one location for easy reference.

Here are the docs that will be presented in today's meeting: <http://goo.gl/aaaaa>.

I will also be posting an All Docs folder on Dropbox and will be sharing with the team.

It's a lot but this is everything.

Thanks,

b. Look at email A in task 1 and check your answers. If your sentence order is different, discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. Which sentence order makes it easier for the reader to read the email quickly and understand it?
2. Will the change in sentence order have any effect on what the reader feels?
3. Do you think that your version is also correct?

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c. Complete the table for email A, labelling the parts of the email using the headings below. You may not need all of the labels. Compare your answers with a partner.

- greeting
- signing off
- a comment to make the reader feel better
- name
- reason why
- what the recipient should do next
- the opening line that says the topic of the email
- what the writer will do next

	email A	email B
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

Task 3

Repeat tasks a, b and c from task 2 for email B.

order

Hi Dan,

Would you please send us the links to Wireframes and Designs today, to this group?

Thanks.

I have to attend a release schedule meeting with Good Old Project, and John and Kate are working out urgent data requirements with ACME as key folks will be away tomorrow and we need to unblock the team.

We'll try to provide our feedback in the morning latest.

Sorry, we really can't attend today.

That way, the guys can review and provide feedback tomorrow, before ACME meeting in the afternoon?

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Task 4

- What do the structures of email A, B and C have in common? Discuss with a partner.
- Read the Improve your writing box below to check your ideas.

Improve your writing

When we write an email, we normally try to make it easy to read.

- In the first sentence after the greeting, we write about the topic of the email (for example, *Here are the docs for today's meeting*);
- at the end of the email, we write about what we will do next or what the **recipient** should do next.

When we say what we will do or the recipient needs to do, we often add **comments**, to explain why and to make the recipient feel better.

LANGUAGE FOR EMAILING

Task 5

- Match the phrases underlined in the emails in task 1 to the following functions. Some example answers are given.

beginning and ending	
1.	hello
2.	I'm sending you
3.	bye
asking the reader to do something	
4.	could you
reasons	
5.	in order to
6.	because
other useful expressions	
7.	I quoted your email and inserted my comments
8.	today or tomorrow morning
9.	as fast as possible / urgently
10.	reply

- Read the Improve your writing box.

Improve your writing

Emailing conventions are different in every company and even every department. For example, in some companies people start their emails with *Dear* while, for other companies, this is too formal and people start their emails with *Hi* or *Hey*. It is important to notice the emailing conventions and copy them.

- Discuss with a partner.
 - Apart from greetings, what other emailing conventions might be different in different companies?
 - What have you noticed about the emailing conventions of your company, department or project? Is it different from the emailing conventions presented in this lesson?

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Task 6

- a. Work with a partner. Read the following sentences that come from real emails. Are they opening lines that give the topic of the email (O) or closing lines that say what the recipient or the writer will do next (C)?

	sentences from emails	C or O?
1.	Please see attached and below the rough plan I put together.	
2.	Let me know what you think.	
3.	Thanks for letting me know about this issue.	
4.	I'm afraid I've run into a few issues so it looks like I won't be able to finish	
5.	Hope this helps. Any questions on details, please check with John.	
6.	Please review and send us your feedback by EOD Monday, 15 June.	
7.	Please let me know if this works for you.	
8.	Thanks for the update.	
9.	I'll keep you updated.	
10.	Just a quick email to remind you to fill out this form before our meeting on	

- b. Imagine that you get work emails that start or end with lines 1 to 10. What could the emails be about? Write down your ideas and discuss them with a partner.

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Task 7

a. Read the situation and the email below. Write your reply.

At the moment, you're working on two projects. On project A, a very important deadline is approaching on Friday so you have too much work. You receive the following email from the project manager of project B asking you to do an urgent task (by Monday morning).

Subject Today's meeting

From: pete@business.com

Hi team,

There's been a change of plan: as it turns out, we'll have to pass the current batch to the X Team by Monday afternoon, not next Thursday as was initially agreed so we really need to finish everything by then. I hope that a shift of the deadline by three days won't be that critical for anyone.

Thank you for your understanding,

Pete

Subject

Progress check

- Did you write about the topic of your email at the beginning?
- Did you write what you will do next or what the recipient should do next?
- Did you add comments to explain your reasons?
- Did you use any of the emailing language from tasks 5 and 6?

b. Compare your email with your partner's email. Discuss the points below.

- Do your emails have the same structure?
- Whose email will be easier for the recipient to read quickly and understand?
- What will the readers of the email probably feel?

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Email A

Hi team,

Here are the docs that will be presented in today's meeting: <http://goo.gl/aaa123>.

It's a lot but this is everything.

I will also be posting an All Docs folder on Dropbox and will be sharing with the team.

This will keep all docs up to date in one location for easy reference.

Expect an email on this soon.

Thanks,

Joan

Email B

Hi Dan,

Sorry, we really can't attend today.

I have to attend a release schedule meeting with Good Old Project, and John and Kate are working out urgent data requirements with ACME as key folks will be away tomorrow and we need to unblock the team.

Would you please send us the links to Wireframes and Designs today, to this group?

That way, the guys can review and provide feedback tomorrow, before ACME meeting in the afternoon?

We'll try to provide our feedback in the morning latest.

Thanks.

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Email C

Thanks for the feedback Tom.

I am generally on board with the approach that you have outlined.

I just have a few questions/comments *inline below*.

Please get back to me guys as soon as you guys can.

It is important that we finalize this because we must begin development of this on Monday.

Thanks.