+49 511 4739339
james@englisch-lehrer.com · www.englisch-lehrer.com

B1 BUSINESS WRITING ≈ 27 MIN

Formal vs Informal Emails — *strike the right tone*

Practise making the greeting, word choice, and closing strike the same tone in business emails.

> English has **no Du/Sie** — register lives entirely in **word choice** .

NAME _____ DATE _____

YOUR BUILD 1 · SORTING ◯ 2 · FILL-IN ◯ 3 · CORRECT ◯ 4 · WRITE ◯

BRICK 1 · SORT BY REGISTER · APPROX. 4 MIN ●○○

Place each phrase in the **Formal** or **Informal** column. Look at the verb: Latinate (formal) or a phrasal verb (informal)?

enquire about delivery times | ask about delivery times | postpone the workshop | put off the workshop | request the invoice | ask for the invoice | investigate the delay | look into the delay | assist the new client | help the new client

FORMAL	INFORMAL

BRICK 2 · COMPLETE THE SUITABLE PHRASE · APPROX. 6 MIN ●●○

Fill each gap with the phrase that matches the stated register. Write one word or one short phrase.

01 First email to a new client: _____ Ms Hartmann, I am writing to request the delivery schedule.

02 Quick note to your teammate: _____ Leo, can we put off the stock check until Tuesday?

03 Formal update to a customer: We must _____ the product briefing until next week.

04 Informal message to a coworker: Let's _____ a short call with the warehouse team.

05 Formal request to a supplier: Please _____ by noon so that we can confirm the order.

06 Informal request to a teammate: Could you _____ the missing delivery note?

07 First email to a new supplier: Thank you for your assistance. Kind _____ , Nora Klein

08 Quick reply to your teammate: Thanks for getting back to me. _____ , Sam

YOUR BUILD

1 · SORTING ○ | 2 · FILL-IN ○ | 3 · CORRECT ○ | 4 · WRITE ○

BRICK 3 · FIND AND CORRECT THE REGISTER MISTAKE · APPROX. 7 MIN ●●○

Each example contains a real error in its greeting, closing, or register. Rewrite the complete example so that it is suitable and correct.

01 Hello Mr Thomas, could you confirm the delivery date? (Surname: Vogel.)

02 Dear Ms, I am writing to enquire about your services. (Name unknown.)

03 Dear Mr Lang, I'm gonna send the report asap. Kind regards, Nora Bloch

04 Dear Ms Reyes, thank you for your time. Yours faithfully, Omar Saleh

05 Dear Sirs, please send the updated safety certificate.

06 Hi Priya, I am writing to enquire whether you require the report. Best, Leo

BRICK 4 · WRITE IN THE SUITABLE REGISTER · APPROX. 8 MIN ●●●

Write a short English email or suitable line for each business situation. Keep the greeting, word choice, and closing consistently at the same register level.

01 You are writing to the supplier Ms Novak for the first time. Formally ask about the delivery date and add a suitable closing.

02 Informally ask your colleague Leon for the same delivery-date information.

03 A formal email to an unknown contact began with "Dear Sir or Madam". Write a final thank-you sentence and the matching closing.

04 Informally decline a team call on Tuesday and suggest Wednesday as an alternative.

MINI-CHECK – CAN I DO THIS YET?

- ☐ I choose my register on a scale from formal through neutral to informal.
- ☐ I put Mr or Ms before the surname, never before the first name.
- ☐ I pair "Dear Sir or Madam" with "Yours faithfully" and a named greeting with "Yours sincerely".
- ☐ I keep the greeting, contractions, verbs, and closing consistently at the same register level.

Not sure about every point yet? Review the register scale and check each signal separately.

Answer key

Check only when you have finished. Every answer comes with the **why** — the rule matters more than the result.

BRICK 1 · SORTING

01 **Formal** — enquire about delivery times
"Enquire" is the formal verb for "ask".

02 **Informal** — ask about delivery times
"Ask" is the everyday informal verb.

03 **Formal** — postpone the workshop
"Postpone" is the formal verb for "put off".

04 **Informal** — put off the workshop
"Put off" is the everyday informal phrasal verb.

05 **Formal** — request the invoice
"Request" is the formal verb for "ask for".

06 **Informal** — ask for the invoice
"Ask for" is the everyday informal phrase.

07 **Formal** — investigate the delay
"Investigate" is the formal verb for "look into".

08 **Informal** — look into the delay
"Look into" is the everyday informal phrasal verb.

09 **Formal** — assist the new client
"Assist" is the formal verb for "help".

10 **Informal** — help the new client
"Help" is the everyday informal verb.

BRICK 2 · FILL-IN

01 **Dear** Ms Hartmann
Formal first contact uses "Dear" with a title and surname.

02 **Hi** Leo
An informal message uses "Hi" with the first name.

03 **postpone**
Formal register uses "postpone" instead of "put off".

04 **set up**
Informal register uses "set up" instead of "arrange".

05 **respond**
Formal register uses "respond" instead of "get back to".

06 **look into**
Informal register uses "look into" instead of "investigate".

07 Kind **regards**
A formal first contact closes with "Kind regards".

08 **Best**
An informal message to a teammate can close with "Best".

BRICK 3 · CORRECT

01 Hello **Mr Vogel**, could you confirm the delivery date?
Mr and Ms attach to the surname, never to the first name.

02 **Dear Sir or Madam**, I am writing to enquire about your services.
Without a surname, use "Dear Sir or Madam", not "Dear Ms" alone.

03 Dear Mr Lang, **I will send the report as soon as possible.** Kind regards, Nora Bloch
A formal greeting and closing must not mix with slang.

04 Dear Ms Reyes, thank you for your time. **Yours sincerely**, Omar Saleh
"Yours faithfully" pairs only with "Dear Sir or Madam"; a named greeting takes "Yours sincerely".

05 **Dear Sir or Madam**, please send the updated safety certificate.
"Dear Sirs" is outdated and excludes women; use "Dear Sir or Madam" or a name.

06 Hi Priya, **do you need the report?** Best, Leo
Casual "Hi" clashes with the formal opener "I am writing to enquire".

BRICK 4 · WRITE

Your answers may differ — just check that every signal matches the register you chose.

01 "Dear Ms Novak, I am writing to enquire about the delivery date for our order. Kind regards, Mia Koch"
Formal first contact combines title and surname with a full form and formal closing.

02 "Hi Leon, do you know when our order will arrive? Best, Mia"
Informal register combines "Hi" and a first name with a direct question and "Best".

03 "Thank you for your assistance. Yours faithfully, Mia Koch"
A message beginning "Dear Sir or Madam" closes with "Yours faithfully".

04 "Sorry, I can't make Tuesday's team call — can we do Wednesday instead? Best, Lina"
An informal decline uses a contraction, offers an alternative, and closes with "Best".

NEXT BRICKS — KEEP BUILDING FREE ONLINE

PREREQUISITE
Email Openings and Closings
englisch-lehrer.com/en/lessons/formal-email-opening-closing

PAIR WITH THIS
Emails: Making Requests
englisch-lehrer.com/en/lessons/email-requests

ALL LESSONS
45+ free lessons
englisch-lehrer.com/en/lessons

HANOVER
Schaufelder Straße 11 · 30167
englisch-lehrer.com/hannover

BERLIN
Kurfürstendamm 30 · 10719
englisch-lehrer.com/berlin

ONLINE COURSES
englisch-lehrer.com/online
worldwide on Zoom

CONTACT
+49 511 4739339
james@englisch-lehrer.com