Reading Assignment: Email Writing

Formal emails are usually sent to people the writer doesn't know or to people outside the company. Less formal emails are usually sent to people the writer knows and/or colleagues. If you are not sure how formal your email should be, copy the email style of the person who wrote to you or uses a semi-formal style.

The following are some guidelines on how to start and end emails with different levels of formality, along with some common phrases used in emails.

Formal emails

Formal emails are similar to letters.

1. **Writing to someone when you do not know the name:**
   - Opening
     - *Dear/ Sir/ or Madam*
     - *Dear/ Sir / Madam*
     - *To whom it may concern*
   - Closing
     - *Yours faithfully* (UK)
     - *Sincerely* (US)

2. **Writing to someone when you know the name:**
   - Opening
     - *Dear Mr. Thomas*
     - *Dear Dr. Thomas*
     - *Dear Ms. Smith* (use for a married / unmarried woman)
     - *Dear John Thomas*
   - Closing
     - *Regards*
     - *Yours sincerely* (UK)
     - *Sincerely* (US)

3. **Contractions**

   When writing formal emails do not use contractions, such as *I'm*, *didn't*, *you'll*, etc.

   Formal *I am writing to ask for some information.*

   Informal *I'm writing to ask for some information.*

Semi-formal emails

Use semi-formal emails with people you do not know very well. Sometimes it is difficult to know if the email needs to be formal or semi-formal. It is a good idea to copy the email style of the person who writes to you.

- Opening
    Dear John
    Dear Olivia

- Closing
    Thanks
    Best regards
    Yours

Informal emails

In many companies, informal emails are sent between colleagues.

- Opening
    Hi John
    Hello Olivia
    Hi (Use *Hi* or *Hello* without the person's name.)
    Hello
    John (Start the email with the person's first name.)
    J (In very informal situations, you can write the first letter of the person's name. This is for someone called *John*.)
    You can also start an informal email with no opening at all

- Closing
    Best wishes
    All the best
    Thanks
    John (You can close an email with just your first name)
    J (In very informal situations, you can write the first letter of your name. This is a closing for someone called *John*

Formal and informal vocabulary

Formal emails use different vocabulary to informal emails.

Formal	Informal
Thank you	Thanks
I would like to apologize for ...	Sorry for ...
I would appreciate it if you ...	Can you …?
Would you happen to know…?	Do you know?
Unfortunately, I will not be able to ...	I can't ...
I would rather not ...	I don't want to ...

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