

Levels of formality in email writing

Asking for help and advice

Formal emails are used when the writer is asking advice from someone outside their company, someone they don't know very well, or someone they consider to be more senior to them. Informal emails asking for advice would most likely be sent to colleagues at a similar level in the company, or to people the writer knows relatively well.

The following table includes common phrases that can be used to ask for advice in formal and informal emails.

Formal	Informal
Would you be able to advise me on the best way to proceed with this?	Could you give me some advice on how to deal with this?
I was wondering if you could give me any advice on this matter.	What should I do?
What advice would you give in this situation?	Have you got any tips?

Giving help and advice

When responding to requests and advice, it's generally safest to follow the style of the original email you received.

The following table includes common phrases that can be used to give advice and to close this type of email.

Formal	Informal
I would suggest that you ...	You should ...
The best course of action would be to ...	What you could do is ...
Have you considered ... -ing?	Why don't you try ... -ing?
I hope I have been of some help.	I hope this helps.
Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information / assistance.	Let me know if you need any more info / help.
I'd be interested to hear how the project progresses.	Let me know how you get on with the project.

Mistakes and apologies

It's more common to use formal language when apologizing for a mistake, even when you are emailing someone you know well. It's a way of showing that you are truly sorry for what happened. Informal emails can also be written, but it's advisable to limit these to situations where the mistake is very minor.

The following table includes common phrases that can be used to apologize. The formal phrases are more commonly used in emails, so focus on these in particular.

Formal	Informal
I am extremely sorry for the inconvenience caused.	Sorry for causing these problems.
I am writing in order to apologize for ...	Sorry about ...
I would like to apologize for ...	
Please accept my / our apologies for ...	
Please accept my / our apologies once again. (use as a closing phrase)	Sorry again for ...