

Writing Tip

Writing formal/informal emails

Informal emails are sent to people you know very well (e.g. a friend, a family member, etc.) For this reason, they use a friendly tone with informal language and a chatty style.

Formal emails are sent to people in an official position or people you do not know well (e.g. a head teacher, a newspaper editor, a local councillor, a personnel manager, etc.) They are written in a formal style with a polite, impersonal tone.

Register Informal
style

Greeting: *Dear Andy/Uncle Fred/Dad/Hi Donna/etc.*

- friendly, relaxed, personal style (it was great to hear from you.)
- frequent use of colloquial expressions (haven't seen you for ages.), idioms (it cost an arm and a leg.), phrasal verbs (set up, turn up, get on), contractions (I've, there's, won't, I)
- omission of pronouns (Heard you were ill.)
- simple linking words (and, but, so) Sign off: Love/Yours/Take care/All the best (first name)

Formal style

Greeting: *Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Mr/Ms + surname*

- serious impersonal style e.g. I would like to extend an invitation to you to... (instead of: I'd like to invite you to...)
- advanced vocabulary e.g. I am writing to enquire whether ... (instead of: I want to ask if ...)
- no colloquial English e.g. Please inform me of any developments. (instead of: Please let me know what happens.)
- frequent use of passive voice e.g. I am honoured to be invited to... (instead of: Thanks for inviting me to ...)
- formal linking words/phrases (Consequently, therefore, moreover, etc.) e.g. I have been charged with

Exercise 1

Which style (informal. Formal) would you use in an email to:

- 1 the director of studies at a science university?
- 2 a classmate from your biology class?
- 3 a well-known scientist?
- 4 a fellow member of your science club?
- a journalist who wrote an article in a science
- a relative asking them about their job?
- 7 your penfriend inviting them to stay with you?

Rubric analysis

Read the rubric and underline the key words. then answer the questions.

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Your school is holding a Science Week next month. Your teacher has asked you to invite a scientist from a university abroad to give a talk to students. Write an e-mail to the scientist inviting them to attend the science week and give a talk. Give details about where and when the event will take place and say why you chose to ask him/her. Write your e-mail (120-180 words)

- 1 Who is going to read your email?
2. Why are you writing it?
3. What style will you write in?
4. How many main body paragraphs will you include? What will each be about?