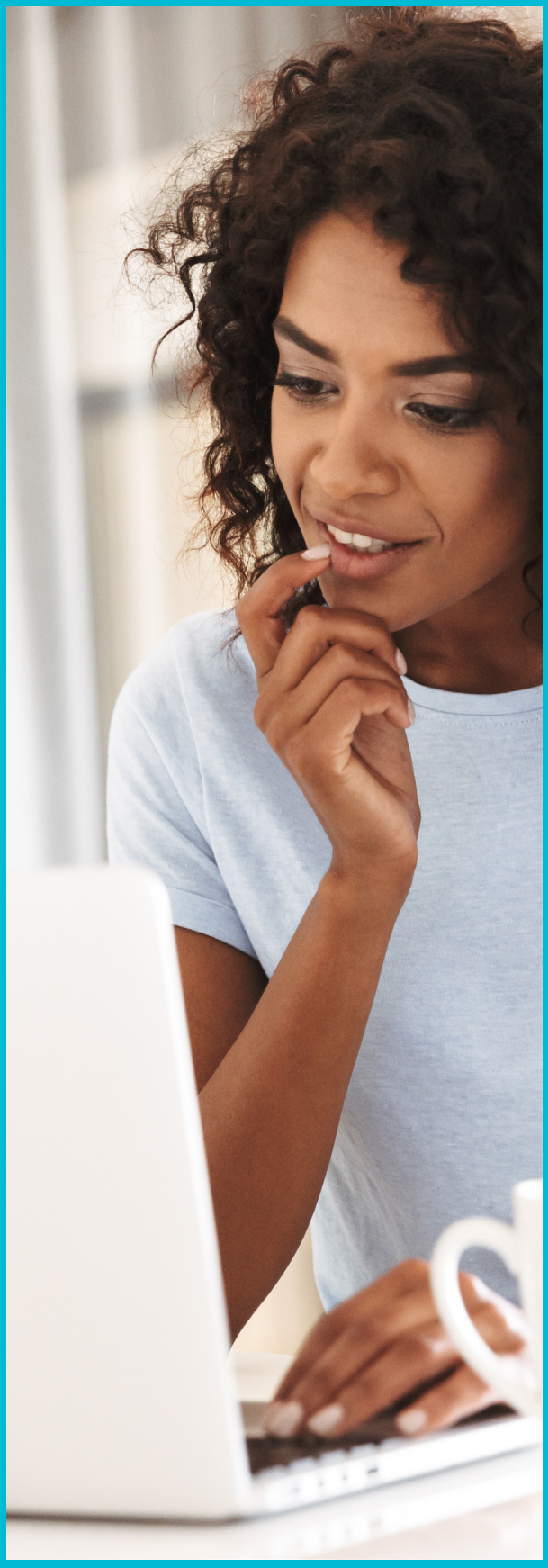
How to Write Professional Emails in English



Talaera

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Introduction

How can powerful emails increase your productivity? Easy: choosing the right words to communicate will make people act on your emails, you will get the outcome you were looking for more accurately and quickly and, ultimately, it will save you incredible amounts of time.

If you want to improve your business emails and make your business writing powerful, you're in the right place.

Whether you want to communicate with business clients or colleagues, managers or subordinates, **what you write and how you write it will impact how people think of you and your company**. And not only that, your writing can be the difference between a delayed project and a successful collaboration.

In this guide you will learn how to help your reader understand and act on your emails through these four basic rules:

- **Include essentials every email should have**
- **Apply psychology-backed tactics**
- **Maximize effectiveness with extra tips**
- **Use a cheat sheet with useful ready-to-use phrases**

It is important to mention that this guide focuses on business emails, not particularly on sales emails. They share many similarities, but the main difference is that generic business emails are much less clickbaity. You want people to read and act on your emails, but you also don't want to sound like you're selling anything.

Ready? Let's get the ball rolling!

Chapter 1

Structure your email: Email essentials

Chapter 1. Structure your email: Email essentials

Regardless of the topic, purpose or recipient, always make sure that your email has a clear and logical structure. For maximum effectiveness, include all the following sections in your business emails: **introduction + details + action + closing**.

INTRODUCTION

Greet your recipient

"Dear Name," "Hello Name," or "Hi Name," are the most common ones in today's business world, from more to less formal.

Introduce the email

Start positive and friendly with some basic background information, the main reason why you are writing (tell them what's going on early on), and a quick summary of the next steps.

> Dear Lena,
>
> Matt asked me to email you to confirm that I can come to London in September to run a product training course with your IT people. I'll be happy to be there anytime within the first two weeks of the month.

DETAILS

Do they need any background info or extra details? If so, that's what you need to include in this section.

Break up your email in short paragraphs (no longer than 4 or 5 lines each). Bullet points help you organize your thoughts and the information will look clearer to the reader, it is more visually appealing, and also faster to scan.

> Regarding costs, here is an approximation:
> - Trainer fee: €900 per day (this will probably be a two-day course)
> - Flight costs: approximately €400
> - Accommodation: around €120 per night

ACTION

What is the next step? If they need to do anything (agree on a meeting time, approve the budget or proofread a document), tell them exactly what it is. If they don't have to do anything after your email, let them know.

> Please let me know if these costs are viable for you. Once I have your approval, I will go ahead and book flights and reserve accommodation. We can keep costs down if we book earlier.

CLOSING

If they have to do something, always (always), say thank you. You can also add "Have a nice day" or "All the best" before your signature.

> Thank you for your support and, if you have any questions about anything related to this training course, do not hesitate to contact me.
> Have a nice day,
> Martha

Chapter 2

Get more responses to your emails with these 11 psychology-backed tactics

Chapter 2. Get more responses to your emails with these 11 psychology-backed tactics

Your business emails are about to get infallible with the following 7 tactics based on psychological studies.

#1 Start strong: the subject line

The tactic: Keep it short and use clear and descriptive words.

Oh, the art of subject lines. There are plenty of articles online with great examples of subject lines for sales emails, but what happens if you want to send an email to a colleague, your boss or your HR manager? There is no recipe for the perfect subject line, but there are two key ingredients that you should always consider:

- **Ingredient number 1: length.** Make sure you keep your subject lines short, ideally under 50 characters, or roughly 14 words. If you make them longer, your title will be cut off (and then, what's the point, right?).

- **Ingredient number 2: clarity**. Grab your recipient's attention making it engaging and descriptive. The content of the email should be clear from the subject line, so "Do you have a sec.?" is too vague. Use logical keywords for search and filtering, for example, the name of the project it refers to or the person you are talking about.

- **Extras:** You can also indicate if you need a response with "Please reply"; If you don't, you can let them know that this is only for their information with "FYI". And include the deadline, if there is one ("by Friday", or "by EOD").

Examples

- Quick question about the sales report
- Would love your expertise on inbound marketing
- Feedback on the latest budget proposal?
- Urgent: tickets for ZP convention
- Invitation to translation project
- Available to meet Sept 15 for a project invitation?

#2 Lead in with benefits

The tactic: if you want to convince someone, start by giving them the benefits they will get from the situation or product.

Why? Your recipient will be more likely to accept if they see how they can benefit from it. Even if it sounds obvious to you, make the benefits explicit for them. With customers, for example, convert product features into benefits to engage them emotionally. The difference? A feature is something that a product or service "is" or "does", while a benefit is something that the product or service "means" to the customer.

Examples

Selling a service?

- *Feature*: "This program offers training on company culture."
- *Benefit:* "This training keeps your organization together."

Convincing a colleague to postpone a deadline?

- *Fact*: "I need to postpone the deadline for our project."
- *Benefit:* "We will have more time to polish this project."

Asking for information?

- *Fact*: We need to know your availability.
- *Benefitt:* Please let us know your availability so that we can book the first session for you.

#3 Give them a reason

The tactic: When you are asking someone to do something, give them a reason, ideally using the word "**because**".

Why? Ellen Langer (Professor of Psychology at Harvard) published a research study about the power of the word "because". She observed that giving a reason resulted in significantly more compliance, even if the reason was not very compelling.

Examples

- Can you please give us the access code to the server, **because** we need it to start the next steps in the project?
- Please remember to RSVP by Friday **because** we need to order the materials before the weekend.
- **Because** we're introducing major changes to the platform, you'll need to attend a brief training session to make your transition to the new version as smooth as possible.
- **Because** we care about your development, we want to offer you this English training.

#4 Add a clear Call to Action

The tactic: In the first paragraph, still within the introduction, make sure that the action you're requesting appears in the last sentence.

Why? This will increase the chances of your recipient remembering exactly what they have to do after your email. The final sentences of the opening paragraph occupy the emphasis position for the entire email. These are the sentences that your recipient will remember best.

Examples

- We are launching a new version of the platform that will allow you to book sessions easier. Because we want the transition to be as smooth as possible, we are organizing a brief training session. **Are you available to meet this Thursday 7th at 11 am?**
- Thank you for your support generating the access tokens. Was your team able to do so yet? We need them ASAP because only with them can we move on to the next phase. **Please send us the tokens as soon as you can generate them.**

"Words not only change the meaning but also the mood and the motivation."

#5 Use positive words

The tactic: Avoid words with negative connotations. Rephrase your ideas so that you show the positive side of things.

Why? Using positive words and phrases will help you present yourself as an optimist, it will enhance the tone of your writing as well as its effectiveness. Slightly to moderately positive emails tend to elicit more responses than neutral ones, but be careful and do not over do it!

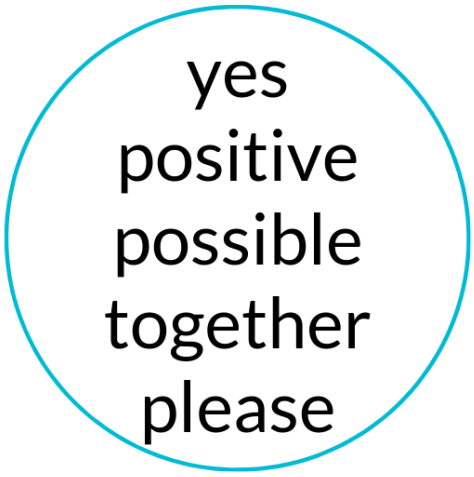
Examples

- **Don't** use **negative** words with customers.
- **Use** more **positive** words with customers.

- If you do **not** sign up before September 10th, it will be **too late** for you to attend the workshop.
- **Please** sign up before September 10th to **enjoy** this workshop.

- Important decisions **cannot** be approved by **anyone except** the CEO.
- The CEO **needs to** approve all important decisions.

- **Without** your approval, we are **stuck** in this phase and **cannot move on**.
- **Please** approve this stage so that we **can** move on to the **next phase**.



Did you know? A slightly negative tone also tends to get higher response rates than a neutral one, and slightly positive outperforms both negative and neutral.

#6 Apply memory tricks

The tactic: Use these two tactics to help your recipient remember.

1. **Four's a crowd:** Limit your lists to three items maximum. More than that will make it difficult for your reader to recall.
2. **Familiar - new:** Start sentences with familiar information.

Why? Readers very rarely remember more than 4 items in the middle of a paragraph, so limit your lists to three.

Also, we tend to make predictions about how situations and sentences will end based on earlier information. As a result, your recipient will understand your message more easily if you begin your sentences with information that they already know. Readers absorb complex details more easily when the data is presented in a "Familiar-new. Familiar-new." format.

#7 Master the power of Thank you

The tactic: Say thank you. All. The. Time.

Why? "Thank you" is the email closing with the highest rates of effectiveness. Researchers Adam M. Grant and Francesco Gino found that saying 'Thank you' increased the amount of additional help being offered by 50%. Showing appreciation triggers helpful behaviors towards others, especially towards the Thanker.

If you are requesting any action in your emails, signing off with a "Thank you" will increase the effectiveness (also, signing off with 'Regards' is a little boring, isn't it?).

#8 More You, less Me

The tactic: Make it about the recipient by using more pronouns like "you" and "your" and less "I", and "my".

Why? We are generally more interested in things that are about us, or at least somehow related to us. Your recipient will pay more attention if they feel involved in the situation.

Examples

- ***Me version:*** I saw that you left us a review on Tripadvisor, I appreciate it. Could I use it on our website as a customer quote? Thanks!
- ***You version:*** Thank you very much for your review on Tripadvisor, it's great! What you wrote could encourage other people to also benefit from the program. Would you be happy with us adding your quote to our website?

- ***Me version:*** I just received the onboarding document you wrote and I would make some changes to improve it.
- ***You version:*** Your new onboarding document looks great. Below are a couple of ideas that you could apply to make it even better.

Extra tip! When asking for a favor, people are more likely to provide help if they feel they are in the same situation as you. Elliot Aronson explains this phenomenon in his book *The Social Animal*. Following this observation, make your requests more effective by using "we" and "our".

#9 If you can say it, you can write it

The tactic: Be polite and professional, but also maintain your voice and style.

Imagine the email happening face-to-face: would you feel comfortable saying what you wrote? Ask yourself: What are the words that you would use speaking?

Informal and plain English is not bad in the 21st century, and unnatural language will only make communication more complicated.

If you want to create a bond, just like face to face, use the recipient's name and show some emotion and visual language.

- ***Emotional words:*** glad, appreciate, understand, happy, discover
- ***Visual language:*** see, clear, looks good, visualize, realize, bright, pattern, thin

Tip! Read your email out loud before sending it. If it sounds like you, it's polite, professional, and clear, then it's good to go!

#10 The art of being clear and concise

The tactic: Express, not impress. Write your emails as clearly and concisely as possible.

The point of most business emails is to get something done as fast and effectively as possible, not to show off anyone's poetry skills. As we mentioned earlier, informal, plain English is totally fine in most business settings in 2019.

Also, being concise will increase the likelihood of you getting a response. Did you know? Boomerang conducted a study where they observed that emails between 50 and 125 words had the highest return rate. That usually accounts for around 5 sentences.

Remember:

- Avoid over-complicated words. It's better to use familiar words that don't confuse your recipient.
- Don't use too many abbreviations.
- Use more verbs than nouns. Verbs provide energy and clarity.
- Get rid of redundant pairs and obvious words: in *the month of* September, *still* continues, *true* fact, 7 a.m. *in the morning*, *free* gift, my *personal* opinion
- But also, don't oversimplify (avoid text messaging and misspellings)
- Organize your ideas with transition words: *however, therefore, first of all, but*
- For longer paragraphs/emails, use headers and conclusions. Adding one line at the beginning and at the end of each paragraph will make a huge difference.
- Use the active voice: *An email will be sent to you by the company.* (passive) → *The company will send you an email.* (active).

Examples

- The below-mentioned merchandise will be dispatched to you by next Friday.
- ***Simplified:*** We will send you these products by next Friday.

- As per your request, attached please find a brochure that describes our training programs.
- ***Simplified:*** Thank you for your interest in our training programs. Please find the catalog attached.

- Kindly notify me.
- ***Simplified:*** Please let me know.

- I should be glad if you would send me the documents.
- ***Simplified:*** Please, send me the documents.

Extra tip! The app Hemingway Editor is a useful tool that scores the readability of your texts. You can use the web version for free to check if your sentences are simple enough to read.

#11 Show authority

The tactic: Use words that evoke confidence and remove weak vocabulary.

Many of us are hesitant to use strong language in emails for fear of being misinterpreted as rude or blunt. We tend to use softeners that end up weakening our voice and reduce our credibility. However, conficent communication with our peers can have a positive impact on your relationships at work and, ultimately, your career.

Harvard Business Review posted an article explaining how meaningless words diminish the power of our message and turn out to be ineffective. Cut down the apologetic language, be confident, and say what you need to say.

Words that make you sound less confident in emails:

- *I think, I believe, I feel, in my opinion*
- *If, would, could*
- *Would you mind*
- *When you get a chance*
- *Just (I'm just checking in to, I just wanted to)*
- *Probably, maybe*
- *Try (I'll try to, what if we tried)*
- *Sorry, apologies, my bad*
- *Does that make sense? Am I making sense?*

Does that mean that you should get rid of them altogether? No, it doesn't. You can keep using them here and there, but be aware of the feeling you are transmitting and find a balance between sounding friendly and lacking confidence.

Example

- ***Weak:*** Hi there! I'm **just** checking in to see if you received my last message. **When you get a chance, would you mind** providing your feedback? **I think that** we **could** make a difference with this project **if** you're open to collaborating! Thank you so much for your time!

- ***Confident:*** "Hi there! Did you receive my last message? It'd be great to receive your feedback. We could make a difference with this project with your collaboration! Thank you so much for your time!"

Extra tip! Sign up for a course on business emails with an experienced teacher. Talaera offers one-on-one online sessions 100% customized to your needs and interests.

Too long, didn't read?

I'm sending this late

⊘ Sorry for the delay.

✓ Thank you for your patience.

Do you understand?

⊘ Does that make sense?

✓ Let me know if you have any questions.

I'm the expert

⊘ I just think that maybe we should...

✓ The best option would be to...

You're welcome

⊘ No problem, no worries!

✓ Always happy to help.

This is complicated to explain

⊘ **long email**

✓ Can we discuss this in person?

Let's schedule it

⊘ What works best for you?

✓ Are you available on ...?

Have you finished?

⊘ Just wanted to check in.

✓ When can I expect an update?

The urgent subject line

⊘ URGENT! PLS RPLY NOW

✓ Urgent: tickets for ZP convention

I need to know

⊘ Kindly notify me when...

✓ Please let me know when...

USE

✓ because

✓ thank you

✓ you

This is your deadline

⊘ If you don't sign up before X, you won't be able to Y.

✓ Please sign up before X to be able to Y.

AVOID

⊘ I think

⊘ just

⊘ maybe

Chapter 3

Before you hit ‘send’

Chapter 3. Before you hit 'send'

Before you hit 'send', ask yourself the following questions:

1. Could I say this to the recipient's face?
2. Am I violating any policies or laws or going against any rules in my recipient's culture?
3. Would I want this message forwarded to someone else?
4. Is the information in a logical order and easy to read?
5. Am I writing this while angry or upset?
6. Will the reader know clearly what to do in response?
7. Will my message give a good impression of me?
8. Are there any misspellings or typos?
9. Is email more appropriate than phone or face-to-face communication?
10. Will my message get the right results?

If your answers are 'yes', you can now hit 'send'!

Bullet-proof grammar & spelling check

- Always run a grammar & spelling check. Here are a few tips to make sure your emails are spotless:
- Let it rest and read it again later
- Use spell check tools like Grammarly
- Use a second set of eyes, like a colleague or a friend
- Read it out loud
- Look out for homonyms: There, their, they're // you're, your // two, too, to // it's, its // right, rite, wright, write // for, four // ware, wear, where // weather, whether

Expert's tip! If it's a long, important email (or a template to keep using), convert it into PDF and read it then. This works even better if you print it out and read it on paper. You will be surprised how many more details you are able to see!

Chapter 4

150+ Useful email phrases that will make your life easier

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Increase your productivity and improve the quality of your emails by applying all the tips given in this guide. For maximized productivity, having some useful phrases like will save you a lot of time.

Make your emails more varied and rich with these over 150 phrases. Save this guide as a cheatsheet whenever you need to write an email.

a) Opening Lines
- a1 Being social
- a2 Emailing first
- a3 Replying
- a4 Apologizing

b) Body Lines
- b1 Attachments and information
- b2 Requests and inquiries
- b3 Asking for clarifications
- b4 Sharing information
- b5 Getting and giving approval
- b6 Scheduling
- b7 Giving bad news

c) Closing Lines
- c1 When something is expected
- c2 Offering help or information
- c3 Apologizing
- c4 Closing greetings

a) Opening Lines

a1 Being social:

By adding these at the beginning of your emails you will sound more friendly and social.

- *I hope you had a good weekend.*
- *I hope you had a great trip.*
- *Hope you had a nice break.*
- *I hope you are well.*
- *I hope all is well.*
- *Hope you're enjoying your holiday.*
- *I hope this email finds you well.*
- *I hope you enjoyed the event.*
- *I'm glad we had a chance to chat at the convention.*
- *It was great to see you on Thursday.*
- *It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday.*

a2 Emailing first:

Are you the one emailing first? Try these:

- *I am writing to you about our last meeting/your presentation yesterday/our next event.*
- *I am writing to you with regards to/regarding/concerning/in connection with...*
- *I am writing to ask/enquire/let you know/confirm/check/invite you to/to update you on/ask for a favor...*
- *I am writing you to follow up on...*
- *I am contacting you to inform...*
- *I am reaching out because...*
- *This is just a quick note to...*
- *This is just a quick reminder...*
- *I wanted to let you know that...*
- *May I take a moment of your time to... (very formal)*
- *It's [Your Name] from [Your Company].*
- *This email is just to let you know that...*

a3 Replying:

- *I just got your request for...*
- *I just read your email about...*
- *As we discussed, I would like to send you...*
- *Thank you for your email about...*
- *Thanks for your email this morning/yesterday/on Wednesday/last month...*
- *Thanks for your feedback on/your invitation/your suggestion*
- *Thanks for sending/asking about/attending*
- *Thanks for your quick reply.*
- *Thanks for getting back to me so quickly.*
- *Thank you for reaching out (to me).*

a4 Apologizing:

- *Thanks for your patience.*
- *Sorry for my late reply.*
- *Sorry it took me this long.*
- *Sorry it's been so long since my last email.*
- *I was sorry to hear about...*
- *Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.*

b) Body Lines:

b1 Attachments and information:

Are you the one emailing first? Try these:

- *I've attached…*
- *Please find [file] attached.*
- *I'm enclosing [file].*
- *Please see the information below for more details about…*
- *The parts in bold/red are my comments/are the changes we made.*
- *Here's the document that you asked for,*
- *I've attached [file] for your review.*
- *I'm sending you [file] as a pdf file.*
- *The attached file contains…*
- *Could you please sign the attached form and send it back to us by [date]?*
- *Here's the [document] we discussed.*
- *[file] is attached.*
- *Please take a look at the attached file.*
- *Take a look at the [file] I've attached to this email.*
- *I've attached [file].*
- *More information is available at www.website.com.*
- *Please note that…*

b2 Requests and enquiries:

- *Could you please…?*
- *Could you possibly tell me…?*
- *Can you please fill out this form?*
- *I'd really appreciate it if you could…*
- *I'd be very grateful if you could…*
- *It would be very helpful if you could send us/me…*
- *I was wondering if you could/if you would be able to…*
- *If possible, I'd like to know (more) about…*
- *Please find my two main questions below.*

b3 Asking for clarifications:

- *I didn't/don't fully understand [something]. Could you please explain that again?*
- *I didn't quite get your point about [something]. Could you be more specific?*
- *Could you repeat what you said about...?*
- *Could you give us some more details on...?*
- *If you could please shed some light on this topic, I would really appreciate it.*
- *Could you please clarify [something]?*
- *Could you please clarify when you would like us to finish this?*
- *When exactly are you expecting to have this feature?*
- *Here are the details on...*
- *Could you please clarify what you would like us to do about...?*
- *If I understood you correctly, you would like me to...*
- *What exactly do you mean by [something]?*
- *Could you explain what you mean by [something]?*
- *In other words, would you like us to...*

b4 Sharing information:

- *Thank you for letting me know.*
- *Thank you for the heads up.*
- *Thank you for the notice.*
- *Please note...*
- *Quick reminder...*
- *Just a quick/friendly reminder that...*
- *Thank you for sharing.*
- *I'd like to inform you that...*
- *Just a quick heads up -*
- *Thanks for keeping me in the loop.*
- *Please keep me informed/posted/updated/in the loop.*

b5 Getting and giving approval:

- *Please let me know if this is OK with you.*
- *What are your thoughts (on this)?*
- *What do you think?*
- *Please let me know what you think.*
- *We just need the thumbs up/the green light. (=we're waiting for approval)*
- *You (totally) have the green light!*
- *He approved of it, so you can go ahead with the project.*

b6 Scheduling:

- *I'd like to schedule a meeting on [day] if you are available/free then.*
- *I am available on [day], if that's convenient for you.*
- *Would you be available on [day]? If so, I'll send you an invite shortly.*
- *Can you make it on [day]? If so, I'll book accordingly.*
- *I'm afraid I can't make it on [day]. How about...?*
- *(Due to...) I'm afraid we need to reschedule/delay/postpone/put back/cancel/call off/move/rearrange our meeting.*
- *We are sorry to inform you that the interview/meeting scheduled for [day] will have to be rescheduled.*

b7 Giving bad news:

- *Unfortunately, ...*
- *Unfortunately, we cannot/we are unable to ...*
- *I'm afraid it will not be possible to...*
- *Unfortunately, I have to tell you that...*
- *I'm afraid that we can't...*
- *We regret to inform you that...*
- *I regret to inform you that (due to...) ...*
- *After careful consideration we have decided (not) to ...*
- *Due to [reason], it won't be possible to...*
- *It's against company policy to...*
- *I tried my best, but...*
- *Despite my best efforts, ...*
- *I can't see how...*
- *I'm sorry but it's out of my hands.*
- *I'm afraid I won't be able to...*
- *I'm sorry to tell you that...*

c) Closing Lines:

c1 When something is expected:

Do you need a reply? Are you asking for a favor or you are meeting soon? These sentences are perfect for those moments!

- *Looking forward to hearing from you soon.*
- *I look forward to hearing from you soon.*
- *Please let me know if this works/if you are available/if that sounds good/if you can/if you can help/if you need to reschedule...*
- *I look forward to seeing/meeting you.*
- *See you on Thursday/next week.*
- *Thanks.*
- *Thank you in advance.*
- *Thank you for everything.*
- *Cheers. [informal; more common in the UK and Australia]*
- *Any feedback you can give me on this would be greatly/highly/much appreciated.*
- *If you could have it ready by tomorrow/the end of next week, I would really appreciate it.*
- *I would appreciate your help in this matter.*

c2 Offering help or information:

- *I hope you find this helpful.*
- *I hope it's clearer now.*
- *I hope that answers all your questions.*
- *If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know.*
- *Let me know if you need any help.*
- *For further details...*
- *If you have any (more) questions (about)...*
- *In the meantime, if you need any more information,*
- *I you need more information/more info/further information,*
- *I know that's a lot to take in, so let me know if anything I've said doesn't make sense.*
- *... please do not hesitate to contact me.*
- *... please feel free to contact me/to get in touch.*
- *... please let me know.*
- *... drop me an email/drop me a line.*

c3 Apologizing:

Do you need a reply? Are you asking for a favor or you are meeting soon? These sentences are perfect for those moments!

- *Thanks you for your understanding/for your patience.*
- *Thanks again for your understanding/for your patience.*
- *Once again, please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused/for the inconvenience caused/for the delay/for the misunderstanding.*
- *I hope this is okay with you.*
- *I really hope we can find a solution soon.*
- *I hope you can understand.*
- *Sorry I couldn't be of more help.*
- *I'll let you know if I come up with a solution.*

c4 Closing greetings:

- *Best regards,*
- *All the best,*
- *Best wishes,*
- *Cheers,*
- *Have a great weekend!*
- *Have a wonderful day!*

Conclusion

If you want to improve your business writing and create emails that work, Talaera offers one-on-one online training tailored to your specific needs.

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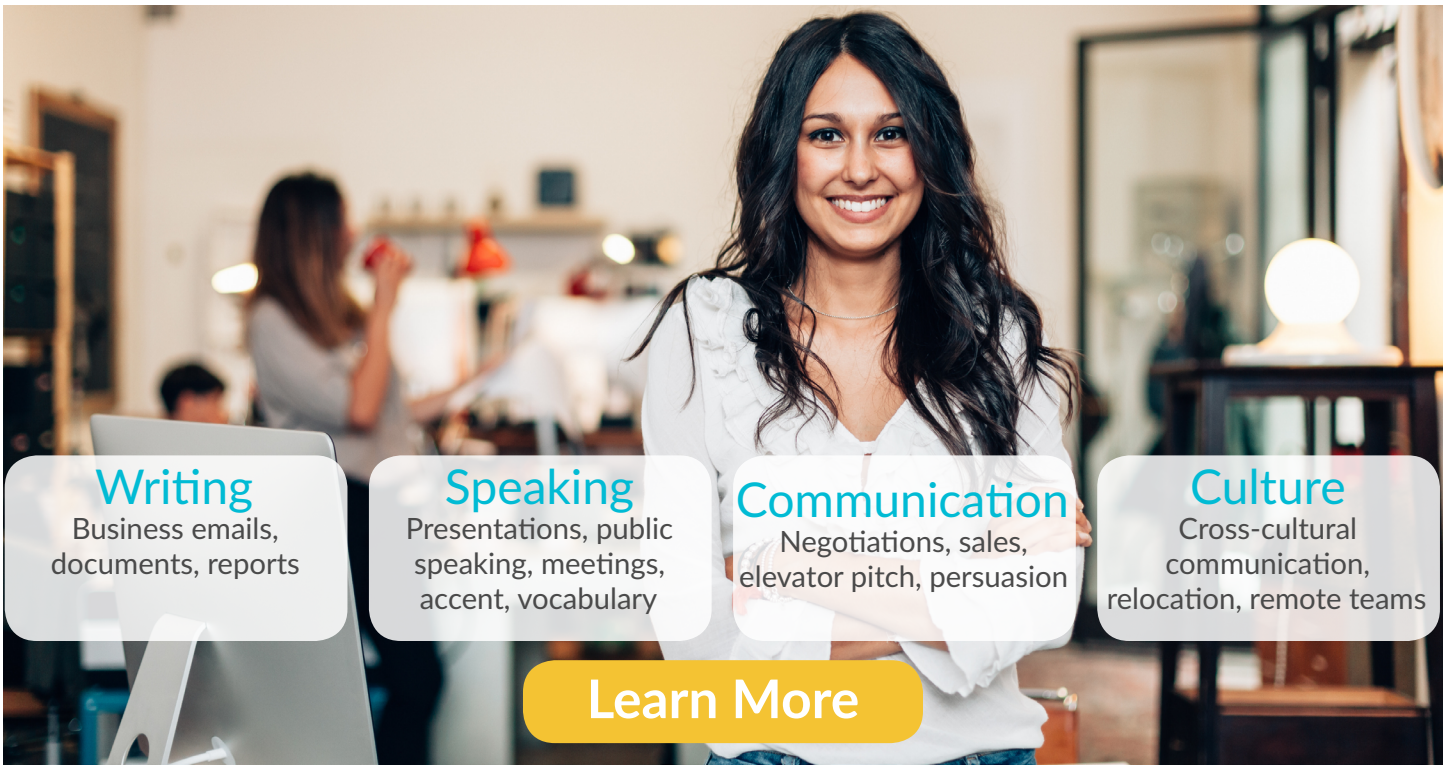
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