What Is a Formal Email?

A formal email is typically sent to someone you don't know well or to someone who's in authority. Examples of someone who you might send a formal email to include your professor, a public official, or even a company you're doing business with.

Writing a Formal Email

While an informal email can often be sent quickly, writing a formal email typically takes a bit more thought and a bit more time. Careful consideration needs to be given to each email element.

With that in mind, let's take a closer look at some common elements of a formal email:

- **Subject Line**

The subject line is what the reader sees in their inbox.

- **Salutation**

The salutation directly addresses the person you're sending the email to.

Dear Professor Smith,Dear Dr.Smith

- **Introduction**

The opening of a formal email often requires the sender to introduce themselves. In contrast, informal emails are sent to someone you know and the introduction isn't needed.

- **Body**

The body of a formal email typically elaborates on the purpose of the email.

- **Closing**

How you end a formal email is equally important. Since the email closing is the last thing your recipient looks at, your email closing can leave a lasting impression.

Yours Sincerely,   yours faithfully ,   best regards ,

Respectfully,

Your email checklist before sending

Once you've crafted your email, there is a couple of things left to check:

- **Make sure your email address is appropriate.** If you're writing from a personal email, your address should look like that: **firstname.lastname@example.com**. If you're emailing on behalf of a company, use your corporate email. Your old **hotguy777@example.com** email isn't appropriate for business correspondence, unless you're running a sauna supply store. Learn more about creating a professional email address.

- **Double-check the recipient's name and email.** Make sure you're writing to the right person and spell their name correctly.

- **Check grammar and spelling.** Proofread your email carefully and avoid using emojis or informal abbreviations like BTW or ASAP. It's better to leave them for your messages to friends.

- **Stick to a professional font.** Although many email clients let you change the font of your emails, use something conservative like Arial or Sans Serif. Avoid playing with different colors and using all caps.

- **Don't forget to attach files.** If you're sending someone a document, make sure to attach it. Name your file properly so a recipient can guess what's inside (e.g., "Marketing Budget Q4.")

Sample Email #1: Question about essay

Subject: POL101 / Section 5: Question about essay

Dear Professor Fiji:

I am a student in your Introduction to Political Science class (POL101).

I have a question about the essay due next Thursday and I was not able to find the answer on the syllabus. Should our essay draw only on readings listed on the syllabus or can I incorporate scholarly articles I read on my own, as long as it fits with the subject of the assignment?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Chantal Jones
Political Science, Class of 20xx

Sample Email #2: Request an in-person meeting

Subject: POL101 / Section 1: Follow up on the exam

Dear Professor Fiji:

I am a student in your Introduction to Political Science class (POL101).

After getting the results of last week's exam, I realized that I am struggling with more than one topic in the course. I want to do my best in this class, and would like to review my exam with you. Is there a time we could meet later this week to talk further?

I look forward to your reply.

Best regards,

Soo Kim
Pre-Med, Class of 20xx