

## Some basic guidelines on how to write a formal/neutral email to your teacher

### Typical openings

always OK

*Dear Mr/ Ms Surname*

Ms – pronounced with a “z” at the end; denotes a woman who may or may not be married

*Dear Mrs/Miss*

– should not be used (it is usually none of your business whether a woman is married or not!)

(*Dear First name Surname* – also possible but more common in business letters)

can be OK (but not as first contact)

depending on your relationship with the person

*Dear First name* - as you know first names are common in English and **do not necessarily indicate “tykáni”**, so you have to be careful and think about age, position etc. (in other words, do not address your professors using their first names unless they specifically tell you to do so!)

*Hello*

not OK normally

*Dear Sir/Madam* – this is only used if you don’t know the name of the person you’re writing to and therefore it looks very strange to address your teacher like that

definitely wrong (don’t laugh, I have had my share of these)

*Dear teacher Surname*

*Dear Mgr. Surname* (Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees are not normally used when addressing people. However, starting with doctoral degrees you can use the teacher’s degree/position; this is especially useful if you want to formally address a university professor *Dear Professor Surname*)

## Typical closings

*Yours sincerely* – especially in first contact, but OK anytime, quite formal

*Best regards/Kind regards/Regards* – the most common, formal/neutral

*Yours faithfully* – used only if you start with Dear Sir/Madam (see above)

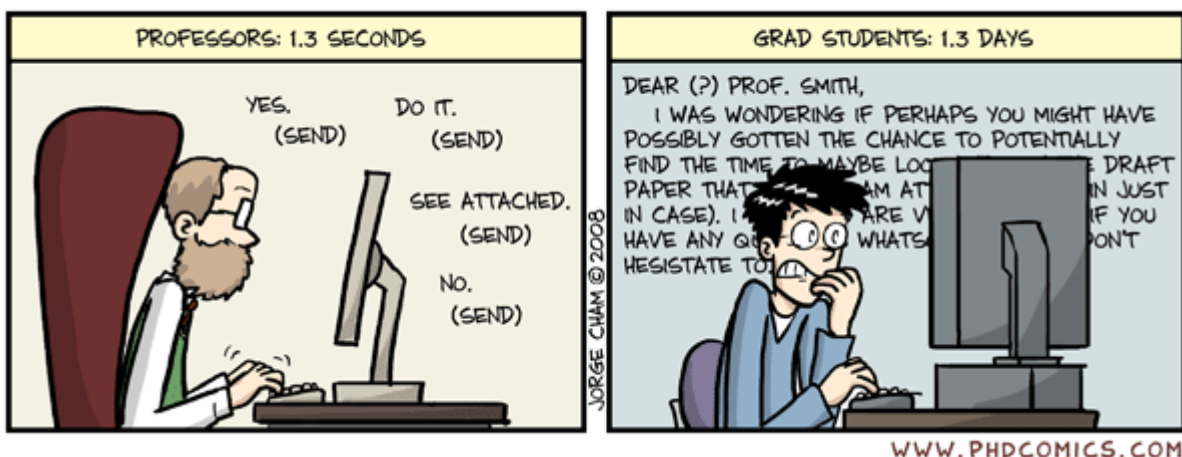
Other endings are possible of course (e.g. Best wishes, All the best, etc.) but make sure you know what you're doing before you use them – basically, if you stick to what's in this handout, you are always safe.

## Replying to emails

I'm afraid life's a little unfair here: while you should always (politely) reply to a letter sent to you by a teacher (unless it's a general info letter sent to a mailing list), it's not always feasible for us to reply as fast as you would like us to (although we do our best) and sometimes our answers may seem rather abrupt (e.g. a simple "OK"). Don't take it personally – it's simply because we have a lot of emails to deal with.

By the way, we do expect you to write your emails to us in English.

## AVERAGE TIME SPENT COMPOSING ONE E-MAIL



### **A few real-life examples**

*Good morning, teacher Zita, I am supposed to have presentation tomorrow but I have cold, so that I have big difficulties with speaking, therefore I will probably not come.*

Not a very nice email – apart from the wrong opening (and a couple of grammar mistakes, but that’s not such a problem, we don’t expect you to be perfect), the tone is impolite: given that this was supposed to be an apology, the word “sorry” is conspicuously missing.

*Dear Dr. Zita,  
I confirm I would like to come and see my test today.  
Best regards*

Nice and simple response to my question.

*Dear Mr. Zita,  
I sat for a VB001 written exam last week, but I wasn't as successful as I wish.  
I would therefore like to ask you whether it could be possible to meet you in your office today or tomorrow and take a look into my exam. I would like to know what mistakes I did. Thank you.*

Nice and polite.

*Hello. Will there be any additional examination slots available? They are all taken and I'll probably be unable to reschedule my exams to be able to prepare on such a short notice.*

Not horrible but not very good either. I’ve never met the student, so “hello” is perhaps not the best choice (although I personally don’t mind so much). It was supposed to be a request: can you see a “please” or “would it be possible”? Not to mention a missing closing.

*Hello,  
thank you for information  
and confirmation.  
Regards,*

“Hello” quite OK here as I know the student and we have exchanged several emails.

*Good morning, in one of my previous email I wrote that I will send you the presentation in the next week, i.e. this week but I meant also the weekend by it because then I have time to fully finish the presentation. Because I didn't present it at the seminar, I am making it extended, it does not have 5 pages like projects of the others, therefore it does not take me 5 minutes to finish it but longer.*

*You obviously think, English is the only thing I have on work but I have much more to do, so if you want to change my degree because of my 3 absences, you can do it, I will at least know what character you are. Nevertheless, I am sending you the presentation by Sunday.*

Breathtaking rudeness. And a big no-no, especially as good manners go. If you ever feel tempted to write something like this, it might be a good idea to read through Disciplinární řád and possible consequences.

**I cannot emphasize enough that an appropriate level of formality and being polite is a must for your communication with us. Mistakes in grammar can be forgiven (though it doesn't look very good if there's a mistake in every sentence) – “mistakes” in manners cannot and will not be tolerated.**