

Unit 10 Writing a formal email

Task 1 Preparation tasks

Speaking: What do you have to bear in mind when writing a formal email to a professor?

Match the vocabulary (1–6) with the more formal way of saying the same thing (a–f).

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. at the moment | a. to inform you |
| 2. a problem | b. to request |
| 3. to tell you | c. an issue |
| 4. talk about it more | d. concerned |
| 5. worried | e. currently |
| 6. to ask for | f. discuss the matter further |

Reading text: An email to your professor

What makes the email below formal? Highlight useful phrases.

Dear Professor Henley,

I am writing to inform you that, unfortunately, I am unable to continue to attend the Logic II course this semester. I would like to request permission to defer as I understand that this is only possible with your approval.

The issue is that I am currently doing an internship with ABC Ltd. It started in July and will continue until the end of the semester. The internship takes up 25 hours per week and I am concerned that it does not leave me with enough time to study. I have already asked if I can reduce my hours there, but this is not possible.

With your approval, I could take Logic II next semester instead. I realise that this would mean a heavier workload than usual next semester, but I assure you that I would be able to manage my time and keep up.

Thank you for considering my request and I would be happy to come in and discuss the matter further.

Regards,

Sarah Price

Task 2 Are the following tips true or false?

1. Use the person's job title if you don't know their name (e.g. Dear Admissions Tutor, Dear Marketing Manager).
2. Start your email by clearly giving your reason for writing. Then you can explain the problem.
3. People are busy, so make it short and clear by using contracted forms such as *isn't* or *don't*.
4. If you have a solution to the problem, suggest it and politely ask if it can be done. If you don't, politely request help.
5. Finish by thanking the person for their help and offering to discuss the matter further if necessary.
6. Regards, (also With regards, Best regards, or Kind regards,) is a more formal sign-off than Yours sincerely.

Task 3 Circle the correct answer.

1. I am writing to _____ you of a change of address.
a. inform b. warn c. instruct
2. I sent an email last week to _____ information about the Philosophy course.
a. demand b. ask c. request
3. I _____ seven classes before I had to take time off for sickness.
a. assisted b. attended c. appeared
4. I am _____ about managing the workload of the course at the same time as my other responsibilities.
a. bothered b. concerned c. upset
5. I think one _____ has been the difficulty in accessing the library as a distance student.
a. mess b. subject c. issue
6. _____, family circumstances mean it is difficult for me to study in the evenings.
a. Currently b. Actually c. Momentarily
7. I would like to request your _____ for a change of timetable.
a. tolerance b. promise c. approval
8. I would be happy to come in and _____ it with you.
a. discuss b. argue c. dispute

Task 4 Write one word in each gap to complete the email.

(1)..... Professor Vazquez,

Many thanks (2)..... your feedback on my assignment.

I'm writing (3)..... inform you that, unfortunately, I have had (4)..... postpone my current module until next term. I requested approval (5)..... the English department (6)..... this and I have (7)..... permission, as long (8)..... I am able to catch up with the work.

I (9)..... very much enjoyed your module and I hope (10)..... be able to rejoin the course (11)..... January, after (12)..... small operation on my foot. I wanted to explain (13)..... situation and to assure (14)..... that I will use my recovery time to keep (15)..... with the reading for the course.

I (16)..... be happy (17)..... come in and discuss the matter further.

Kind (18).....,

Ewan McGregor

(adapted from www.learningenglish.britishcouncil.org)