

Professional Emails - In Tray Exercise

Objective

- Introduce/review and practice using standard email phrases
- Discuss opinions on good/bad emailing practice
- Identify how the use of abbreviations, jargon and smileys in business communication influences understanding

Level: B1-C2

Time: 90 minutes

Materials:

1 copy per participant of page 1 to 3

1 copy of pages 4 to 6, cut up, per pair/small group

Procedure

1. **Lead in** – participants discuss questions in pairs or small groups
2. **Reading task** – working in pairs or small groups, distribute one set of messages (pages 5-7) each. Ask participants to read the instructions for task one, then read the messages. When they have all read each message, discuss the questions and then feed back to the whole group – the goal is to prioritise the messages and begin thinking about how to respond. A secondary goal is to highlight how use of jargon and abbreviations can hinder good communication (specifically look at the text message from John to Thomas!)
3. **Task two:** In groups, participants take an equal number of messages each and find examples of the language in task two in their own messages. When they have finished they should compile a list with their partners. In case of confusion, tell them that there are 3 examples for each type of expression contained within the 7 messages. When they are finished show them that page 3 is a record of all the emailing and communication language used in all the messages.
4. **Practice:** split the class into pairs. Firstly all participants write email A, using the language stipulated in the rubric. When they are finished, they should swap their email with a partner. The partner should use rubric B to write a reply. While participants are writing, monitor and take note on the accuracy of their emails: good examples of tricky language, examples where improvements could be made.
5. **End** the session with a feedback session.

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Lead in:

Discuss these questions with a partner:

1. When is it best to write an email and when is it better to make a phone call?
2. How comfortable do you feel using abbreviations and smileys when writing emails?
3. Do you usually use small talk in emails? Why? Why not?
4. Do native speakers write better emails than non-native speakers?
5. When was the last time you a) wrote/received a letter? b) wrote/received an email?
6. What are the main differences between letters and emails?
7. What makes a good email?

Task one:

It's Monday 7 May. You work for the Research and Development department of Modern Systems, a company which manufactures technical machines and equipment. Your boss, Thomas Bates, is ill and you will have to take over his work for the next 5 days.

Look at the emails, telephone calls and text messages which Thomas has received. Work in groups and put the correspondence in the order in which you would deal with it. Discuss these questions:

- Who is the message from? Internal? External? Customer? Colleague? Supplier?
- Is there a deadline? Is there any flexibility?
- What impact does the work have on the organization?
- Can you delegate any tasks to other colleagues?
- What's the best way to deal with each message?

Task two:

Find standard phrases in the messages and write them next to each category:

- Small talk
- Referring to previous contact
- Giving good news
- Giving bad news
- Offering help
- Making requests
- Apologizing
- Referring to future contact

Email phrases

Small Talk

How are things going at your end?

How's business?

I hope you're having a good week so far.

Referring to previous contact

Thanks for your call yesterday.

It was nice to see you at the fair last week.

I hope you had a good journey back to...

Giving good news

I'm pleased to be able to tell you that...

I'm delighted to tell you that...

You'll be pleased to hear that...

Giving bad news

Unfortunately...

I'm afraid (that)...

I regret to tell you that...

Offering help

Do you want me to...?

Would you like me to...?

Should I...?

Making requests

Could I ask you to ...?

Would it be possible for you to...?

Could you...?

Apologizing

I apologise (for any inconvenience caused).

I'm sorry about...

Sorry, but...

Referring to future contact

I look forward to receiving your response.

I look forward to hearing from you

Speak to you soon.

Over to you!



A: Write an outgoing email to a partner. Include the following:

- Small talk
- Referring to previous contact
- Giving good news
- Making requests



B: Respond to an incoming email. Include the following:

- Giving bad news
- Offering help
- Apologizing
- Referring to future contact

Messages – cut up and distribute one group of messages between two to three learners



From: Frank Jones

To: Thomas Bates

Date: Sunday 6 May

Subject: Faulty electrics – shut down

Thomas

Unfortunately one of the machines that we bought last week has broken down – we've had to shut down production. I'm afraid that we will either need immediate support from you or we will have to cancel our contract and look for another supplier – could you give me a call ASAP?

Frank

From: Jill Hadfield – Training Solutions

To: Thomas Bates

Date: Wednesday 2 May

Subject: Customer Service Seminar

Good morning Thomas

How are things going at your end? Thanks for your call yesterday. I'm pleased to be able to tell you that we do have capacity for a training course for your staff on 21 May. As this is quite short notice, could I ask you to confirm that you will definitely be booking the training by no later than 8 May? Let me know if you've got any questions.

Speak to you soon,
Jill

From: 0150 90913925
To: 0161 7736252

Hi Thomas

Sorry but the conference rm is booked ☹ Our mtg will have 2 B postponed 'til we can find a free room, poss. tmrw. Give me a call, John



From: Piotr Sikorsky

To: Thomas Bates

Date: Monday 7 May

Subject: Order change - urgent

Dear Thomas

I hope you had a good journey back to the UK last week. Things haven't been going well here and I regret to tell you that our internal R&D department have asked that you make some last minute changes to the machines you are sending us. It's complicated so do you want me to set up a telcon for this afternoon? I know this is going to be problematic so I apologise for any inconvenience caused.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Best wishes
Piotr

"Hi Thomas! Nadia here from Stromberg. It's 10:15 on Monday morning. How's business? It was nice to see you at the fair last week and I wanted to follow up what we discussed about the new brochures. Would you like me to set up a meeting for the beginning of next month? Would it be possible for you to give us half a day? There are quite a lot of points to cover. Give me a call back – 0030 56643241. Bye for now!"

" Good morning Thomas – Ian here. It's Monday – 9:30. I hope you're having a good week so far. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to cancel our meeting this afternoon – we've had a bit of an emergency here, I'll tell you about it later. Should I let the rest of the team know or do you want to contact them? I'm sorry about the short notice – I'll give you a call later. Bye."

From: Info@engineeringoptions.de

To: Thomas Bates

Date: Monday 30 April

Subject: New opportunities – new challenges

Dear Mr Bates

You'll be pleased to hear that we are holding our fifth conference for Engineering Leaders in Madrid, Spain this year. Leaders in the field of Engineering will have the opportunity to meet and discuss the challenges they are dealing with and the new opportunities being presented in their industries. I'm delighted to tell you that Steve Hobson of International Engineering magazine will be our keynote speaker this year.

To book your place on the conference just click on the link below:

www.engineeringoptions.com

The deadline for early bird registration is August 1.

I look forward to receiving your response

Jerry Stevenson
President of Engineering Options
