

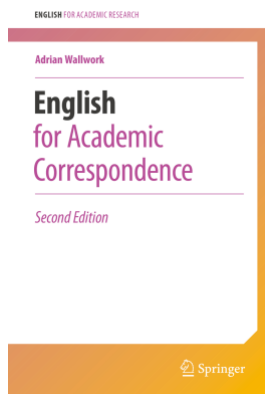
WRITING EMAILS

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WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document is primarily intended for students of my PhD English course on Scientific Communication. So some of what is written will only make sense if you have done the course. The course only covers a very small area of writing emails.

For more details on corresponding with editors, reviewers, colleagues and professors:



If you want to do the course contact: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com

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1 HOW TO ADDRESS SOMEONE. DEAR ???

Writing to someone for the FIRST and the SECOND time

The FIRST time you write to someone, for example, to me, you can write:

1. *Dear Adrian Wallwork*
2. *Dear Dr Wallwork* (I don't actually have a PhD, but I won't be offended – nor would other recipients be offended unless they are professors)
3. *Dear Professor Wallwork* (I am not a uni prof, but again I won't be offended)

I would avoid *Dear Mr Wallwork* (see next section) and you should only write *Dear Adrian* if you already know me quite well or you are a similar age (which you are not!)

However, the SECOND time you write to me you should only use either *Dear Dr/Prof Wallwork* or *Dear Adrian* (if you know me well).

NEVER *Dear Adrian Wallwork*

If the person you are writing to is a similar age to you, then in your second email writing *Dear Joe* would be absolutely appropriate.

A good general rule when replying to someone for the first time is to

- address them using exactly the same name (both first and last name) that they use in their signature
- precede this name with an appropriate title
- adopt their style and tone. If you are making the first contact, then it is safer to be formal in order to be sure not to offend anyone. Then as the relationship develops, you can become less (or more) formal as appropriate. In any case, always take into account the reader's customs and culture, remembering that some cultures are much more formal than others.

Spell the recipient's name correctly

Make sure your recipient's name is spelt correctly. Think how you feel when you see your own name is misspelled.

Some names include accents. Look at the other's person's signature and cut and paste it into the beginning of your email—that way you will not make any mistakes either in spelling or in use of accents (e.g., è, ö, ñ).

Although their name may contain an accent, they may have decided to abandon accents in emails—so check to see if they use an accent or not.

Use an appropriate initial salutation and be careful with titles

With Anglos it is generally safe to write any of the following:

Dear Professor Smith,

Your name was given to me by ...

Dear Dr Smith:

I was wondering whether ...

Dear John Smith

I am writing to

Dear John

How are things?

Note that you can follow the person's name by a comma (,), by a colon (:), or with no punctuation at all. Whatever system you adopt, the first word of the next line must begin with a capital letter (Your ..., How ...).

If you have had no communication with the person before, then it is always best to use their title. Also, even if Professor Smith replies to your email and signs himself as John, it is still best to continue using Professor Smith until he says, for instance: *Please feel free to call me John.*

In many other countries people frequently use functional or academic titles instead of names, for example, **Mr Engineer, Mrs Lawyer**. However, many people in academia tend not to use such titles when writing to each other in English.

In the UK the most commonly used salutation, even in professional emails, is Hi. Although Hi used to be considered very informal, this role has now been taken by Hey.

Avoid problems when it is not clear if the recipient is male or female, or which is their surname

It may be difficult to establish someone's gender from their first name. The best solution is always to write both / all names:

Dear Stewart James

Dear Tao Pei Lin

Similarly, avoid Mr, Mrs, Miss, and Ms—they are not frequently used in emails. By not using them you avoid choosing the wrong one.

So, if you are writing to non-academics, be careful how you use the following titles:

Mr—man (not known if married or not)

Ms—woman (not known if married or not)

Mrs—married woman

Miss—unmarried woman

2 EMPATHY AND RESPECT: THINKING FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW NOT YOURS

Email that is like to go in prof's trash

Good morning prof

My name is Pinco Pallino and I am enrolled in the first year of the PhD course in Terrestrial Vehicles and Systems of Transport. Since it is only now that I have made my online enrolment to the course "Scientific English", I am not in the list of students of either the first course or the second course of lessons. I would like to know whether, despite my delay in enrolling, I can still participate in the course: if possible I would like to follow the first session. However, for reasons that unfortunately I cannot change, which are related to my activity as a PhD student, I will not be in Pisa in concomitance with the first lesson of the first session.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Dr Pinco Pallino

PS My girlfriend wants to do an online English course, please could you send me recommendations ... and also for a good English grammar (preferably with Italian explanations).

Empathetic and respectful email

Dear Prof. Wallwork

Am I too late to take part in the first session of your Scientific English course?

Thanks in advance.

Pinco Pallino

Being POLITE and FORMAL does NOT equal being respectful.

- Think **ONLY** about what your reader really needs to know - don't include information that is of interest to **you** but no interest to **him / her**.
- The reader is in a hurry – help them find what they want quickly and easily.
- Write **less and you make fewer mistakes**.

3 LETTER TO EDITOR – SUBMISSION STATUS

Disastrous email to understand status of your submitted paper

Subject line: Paper submission- reply urgently!!

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is XX and I submitted my paper to you several months ago and I am still waiting for your judge.

This is the third email I write to know if my paper was admitted or not. Please answer me in any case.

Best regards

When you write an email, think first about what your desired outcome is. Then only write what will help you achieve that outcome. Always be constructive, positive and helpful.

Subject line: (1) **Manuscript 1453**

Dear (2) **Dear Editor / Dear Dr Helena Smith / Dear Dr Smith**

I was wondering (3) if you had received my email sent *date* (4) **see below**) regarding the submission of my manuscript (1453).

5) Please can you let me know if the review process has begun and when I can expect the reviewers' comments.

Attached is a **6) copy of the paper for your convenience.**

Best regards

7) Minimum number of words

8) Clear layout

Key:

1. Write the subject line from their point of view, not yours. Give specific info.
2. [Find out the editor's name, otherwise write Dear Editor]
3. Use a polite neutral slight indirect expression – NOT a passive/aggressive approach
4. Demonstrate the negative effects indirectly rather than specifically referring to them. In this case you provide the evidence that you have been in contact several times before.
5. State what you want.
6. Be proactive.
7. Using the minimum number of words and clear layout increase the chances of your mail being read.

Key life lesson: If someone doesn't do what they ask you or fails to answer a question in an email or misunderstands you ... this does not mean that by default they are an idiot.

Think of the other person as YOU. If you were the other person, how would you like to be treated.
Not like an idiot I suspect!
