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"THANKS" BUT NOT "THANKS ANYWAY": E-POLITENESS IN E-MAILING

"Any fool can know. The point is to understand".
(Albert Einstein)

The art of e-mailing has worked out its own rules over recent years. This paper brings together the field's best knowledge and shows exactly how to put it to work. It addresses constructing well-crafted e-mails in view of language, structure, rhetoric, and culture. Special attention is paid to choosing adequate linguistic devices to write openings and closings, communicate news, make requests etc. Emphasized here are: choosing linguistic devices with cultural congruence and rhetorical sensitivity in mind – to get heard by the addressee, to create goodwill and develop relationships.

Key words: e-mailing; e-politeness; linguistic devices; structural traits; netiquette; cultural congruence; rhetorical sensitivity.

У статті розглянуто сучасні тенденції електронного листування та запропоновано способи поліпшення його ефективності з огляду на мовні, структурні, риторичні та культурні аспекти. Докладно висвітлено специфіку добору мовних засобів у початковій та заключній частинах листа; при повідомленні новин, у проханнях тощо. Особливу увагу приділено способам ведення ефективного діалогу та налагодження дружніх відносин з адресатом на підставі культурної відповідності повідомлень та їхньої риторичної чутливості.

Ключові слова: електронне листування; ввічливість; мовні засоби; структура; нетикет/ мережевий етикет; культурна відповідність; риторична чутливість.

В статье рассмотрены современные тенденции электронной корреспонденции и предложены способы повышения ее эффективности в языковом, структурном, риторическом и культурном аспектах. В статье освещается специфика отбора языковых средств для написания начальной и заключительной частей электронного письма, сообщения новостей, выражении просьбы и т. п. Особое внимание уделяется способам ведения эффективного диалога и установления дружественных отношений с адресатом на основе культурного соответствия сообщений и их риторической чувствительности.

Ключевые слова: электронная корреспонденция; вежливость, языковые средства; нетикет/сетевой этикет, культурное соответствие; риторическая чувствительность.

The **purpose** of this article is to provide an overview of current trends in e-correspondence by analyzing of native speakers' (NS) e-mails, and to provide some useful hints for non-native speakers (NNS) of English. We will deal with several **cultural congruence** and **interpersonal rhetoric** issues in such computer-mediated communication.

Despite research efforts in the area of e-communication undertaken by such scholars as N. Akhrenova, N. Baron, S. J. Bloch, S. Biesenbach-Lucas, A. Danielewicz-Betz, N. L. Inglis, J. Gains, D. Holtbrügge, A. Weldon, H. Rogers, O. Lutovinova, N. Kuznetsova M. Stolyarova, M. Yate [1; 2; 3; 5; 7; 11; 12; 16; 17; 19; 21], and a bunch of hands-on resources, including those available online, for

example, by L. Gaertner-Johnston, S. Hughes, E. Barton [6; 15; 18], several points have escaped detailed scrutiny. The **timeliness** of getting back to writing emails is obvious: we all have to write them on a daily basis. And make our messages **culture congruent** [10]. "In some countries, emails are structured like a formal letter. Elsewhere, they may sound more like a text message to a friend… Emails in Germany, for instance, are generally formal, to the point and without personal messages. Elsewhere in Europe, emails may take on a more friendly tone with salutations of "dear" and sign-offs like "yours." In Africa and South America, emails are often expected to include personal notes," says Tim Flood, associate professor of management and corporate communications at University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School [6]. "In countries where a personal connection is important, start an email with the question you want answered and then add a paragraph with something that personally connects you to the recipient. More important, it helps to think of email as the opening to a better form of communication, said Mike Song, chief executive officer of getcontrol. net and a consultant who helps businesses build relationships overseas. It's too easy for emails to be misinterpreted, so instead, use it to set up a video chat or a one-on-one meeting. "In Japan and Germany, titles like san and frau are expected when emailing. *Mr* or *M*s are appropriate in other countries. Keep it simple. Then, make it complicated. In Japan and China, sometimes emails will be expected to be loaded down with every detail of a business arrangement." [Ibid.]. Recent research has shown that competence alone is not sufficient for communicative competence. Speakers of a language should also master sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic norms to achieve communicative purposes appropriately [7]. Cultural background has a significant impact on the preference for formalness, promptness, preciseness, task-relatedness, and relationship-relatedness in email communication [17]. Rhetorical sensitivity, a term coined by Roderick Hart and Don Burks in 1972, is a concept related to modifying communication's content and approach to appeal to the target audience [20, p. 851].

This paper aims to compare the culture flavored emailing styles of NS and NNS of English and to suggest some ways of avoiding cultural and language-related blunders. We analyzed 70 NS messages and 90 messages written by NNS. We will also discuss relevant linguistic issues based on our email communication experience with NS and NNS – the material collected over the years – in light of language and culture. Specifically, we will compare and contrast their emailing styles, and provide guidelines for those mastering English as a foreign language (EFL).

Every letter – including emails – involves several levels: **information** and the **relationship**. And they're inseparable, like mind and body. You might think: "I'm just interested in presenting the facts." But in a letter, there is no such thing as "just facts." Facts are presented for a purpose, and the ultimate purpose of all communication is persuasion: persuading someone to accept your point of view, a negative reply or something else. We persuade by both **logic** and **emotions**. Many of us like to justify our decision with facts, but the decision itself is ultimately based on emotional appeal. That emotional appeal involves many things – which all fit within

the framework of the relationship. It involves a certain degree of personalness, understanding the addressee's point(s) of view, needs, background, attitudes and expectations. For instance, the last thing the reader's interested in is what goes on in your office. One way to kill the reader's enthusiasm is by starting a letter with a cold impersonal phrase like: *"According to our/my records…"* or other references to invoices, files, and the like [12, p. 176].

Let's get started with an extralinguistic point (but culture specific one). NS never send important business emails on Friday afternoon or on weekends. They do so only on workdays, while NNS tend to send messages in a 24/7 mode. So it seems logical to wait with important emails till Monday (or other workdays) morning(s). It is also important to reply promptly.

Now let's get to email address names or **user names**. User names for **professional purposes** usually contain the first name, the last name or a combination of both, for example: *alex. johnson@sample. com*; *a. johnson@sample. com*; or *aljohn@sample. com.* Sometimes a degree is also mentioned, e. g. *dr_alex. johnson@sample. com.* Such user names tend to be **informational** and **formal**, while names like *coolcucumber007@sample. com; CandyGal@sample. com; masyasha87@sample. com* are overly **emotional, informal,** and project **no professional** aura**.** In general, it is preferable to use lower case characters and **–** possibly **–** the underscore to create an email address.

Next comes **subject line**. In about half the cases, NNS left it blank. On the other hand, NS always **fill in the subject line**, and make it **subject specific** (like "One Idea for Your Study") and often add a word or two even to a RE: message (which might restate the topic of the received message or just say "RE: your message). NS know that subject line is as important as the message itself. As Lynn Gaertner-Johnston, US writing guru, put it, "If you are not sure what the subject is, you are not ready to send a message." [15] She also emphasizes such critical points as avoiding sarcasm, jokes, and criticism ("d**on't scold anyone for any reason in email. B**ecause email is not two-way communication…it's a perfect way to kill relationships") [Ibid.]. NS never send *blank* messages, especially those with attachments. Native speakers of English are usually very polite. They follow **etiquette** and **netiquette** *(net etiquette)* rules. In netiquette, for example, the main rule is "be **concise** and **inoffensive**." Letters and emails written by native speakers of English – especially formal messages – usually contain some kind of **thanks**, either in closing, or in the very beginning of a message. Such thanks may vary from formal to informal:

Thank you very much/ever so much.
Thank you very much indeed.
Thanks a lot.
Many thanks. Many, many thanks. /
Thank you.
Thanks. Thanks for … .
Thanx.

For example: *Thanks for the wonderful review. Keep them coming!*
Many thanks for responding so fast.
Thank you for the opportunity to meet.
Thank you for investing your time in me. I appreciate it!
Thanks! I appreciate your ongoing support.
Thank you for thinking of me.

Yet conversely, *"thanks anyway"* or *"anyway, thank you for…"* (rendered in Ukrainian as "дякую у будь-якому разі – хоч(а) Ви й не допомогли") is normally used when someone has done something for you, yet it had been unsuccessful. In a text message or an email it could sound as negative or sarcastic *("You didn't really help, but thanks for trying")*. On the other hand, if you say (not write!) it after saying something nice like *"I appreciate the offer but I can't accept it right now. Thanks anyway."* then *"thanks anyway"* is rather positive. It depends on the context, the tone, and the way it is said. In the above case it's a typical **face-threatening act** (the term was coined by P. Brown and S. Levinson in their classical work on politeness) [9].

As just noted above, thanks might be expressed in either openings or closings, i. e. the first or the last paragraphs. **Opening and closing** paragraphs are the most important parts of a written message. They are the reader's first and last impressions: what s/he first sees and what s/he comes away with. If a reader doesn't like the opening, she may not read any further. For that reason, you want to make the opening as attractive as possible – something that catches the reader's eye. That something can be an intriguing question; not just anything of course, but a question that ties into the main subject. It can be a shocking statement, or a surprising statistic. But the easiest way is to use something like *"I'm writing to … ."*

NS use a blank line between paragraphs. They also follow the rule: one idea per paragraph.

The **salutation** is often a problem, especially when you're addressing someone you don't already know. *Dear Sir or Dear Madam* – are cold and impersonal. Even if you're writing to a group of people, try to make it a little more personal. One way is to address the reader in the singular instead of plural. Or to **use a pronoun** instead of a noun:

Poor:	Better:
Dear Stockholder:	*Because you own stock in …:*
This is to inform you of …	*I'm writing to tell you about ….*

[12, p. 190–191]

When choosing between *Hello* and *Good afternoon/evening/morning*, NS tend to choose *Hello* (or less formal *Hi / Hi there*), while NNS, as our material has shown, stick mostly to *Good afternoon/evening/morning*.

How to handle **first and last names in a salutation**? Use a first name in the salutation only if you know the person, and you're already on a first-name basis. Depending on the nature of the relationship, it's usually safe to let the other person use yours first in his opening – and then replying in the same way. In general, an email is not the place to suddenly become someone's friend. The degree of formality differs, even in countries where English is the first language. British tend to be more

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formal than Americans. It's always safe to start off being formal *(Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms),* and shifting to a more informal tone *(Dear Frank/Jane)* if the other person addresses *you* that way. However, NNS speakers tend to somehow overdo it: when addressing a professor, NNS would rather choose *"Ms Davis"* or *"Dear Ms Davis"* instead of more appropriate option like *"(Dear) professor Davis."*

An alternative to either first or last name – is using both together. For example: it's less formal than *"Dear Mr. Baker,"* but not as personal as *"Dear Ed."* One thing you *don't* want to do is: shortening someone's name (Dear Steve instead of Steven) unless they use that short form themselves.

In today's emails **–** a warm greeting and especially a "**small talk**" line **before proceeding to business** is an important etiquette element. Think audience. A person may write a dozen letters a day and not remember exactly what he wrote to you about. The **opener** might contain a short **reminder** to him. Also, the kind of **opening** depends a great deal on the kind of message. If it's **good news**, put it upfront, **immediately**. That's what the reader wants to hear. Once he's gotten a favorable reply, he'll be more receptive to the details and anything else you want to tell him. If it's **bad news**, you'll want to locate it further in the text, and start the letter with a buffer – some point of common agreement. Use the so-called **four-point formula**:

1. Find a point of agreement.
2. Present your reasons first.
3. Mention the refusal.
4. Close with something positive [12, p. 197].

But no matter what your subject, if you want people to read your letter – start with something that catches them. The first paragraph says one of two things to the reader: "This looks interesting," or "This looks dull."

Avoid openings with participial (-*ing*) phrases like: *"Having received your letter of September 13th…"* They're too slow and formal. As well as phrases like: *"I would like to take a few minutes of your time."* "*I would like to take the opportunity to…"* Try to avoid clichés throughout. There's nothing memorable about them. If it's someone you know, refer to something you've done together, a shared moment, something that happened that you can both relate to. NS **watch out for formality.** Their **openers** usually sound **natural**. For instance:

It was a pleasure talking to you last week.
I know how busy you are.

In **closings**, again, avoid -*ing* phrases like: *"Hoping to hear from you soon,"* or *"Looking forward to your reply."* Avoid weak endings like: "*We hope you will let us send you a copy.* Or "*We trust you will return the enclosed card.*" Such phrases suggest a lack of confidence, at a time when the reader needs the final push. Or things like: "*Thank you for your interest*." No one believes them. The last sentence or two of a letter is also a good place to **summarize,** especially if you're dealing with complex information. Some **good closings:**

Please contact me if I can help in any way.
If you have any questions, please call me. I'd like to be of help.
I'm depending on you, John.
Thanks, Ed.

Poor Closings:

~~Thank you for your interest in ...~~
~~Please do not hesitate to contact me.~~
~~If I can be of any further assistance regarding this matter, please let me know.~~

The complimentary close is another uneasy area. The complimentary close equates with the "good-bye" of a conversation. But most complimentary closes are formal, stiff, and stereotyped, and lacking in personal warmth. There's nothing sincere about "*Sincerely yours*," or even "*Very sincerely yours*." Better options: *With best/warmest wishes // My very best*; *My thanks / Thanks very much. It really helps.*

At the same time, **beware of false intimacy** when writing to strangers, brief acquaintances, or superiors. You may want to use a formal phrase. But if the whole message has a conversational tone, why not carry it through to the closing.

The **signature** is also very important. For one thing, it fixes responsibility for the message. For another, it affects the general appearance of the letter. An exotic illegible flourish may be fine for a friend, but it's out of place when writing to a superior or to someone you don't know.

When drafting a letter, NS employ politeness and reduce their ego and categoricalness to a minimum – their status, needs, and their individuality. NS **refer to the addressee more** often than to themselves. In other words, they use *you* and *your* more than *I* or *me*. This focus on the reader, or the *You-attitude,* is evident in **avoiding making *I* the first word in a message**. At the same time, *I* and *we* do have their place in a correspondence. But the personal voice is always preferable. However, some writers come up with strange sentences to avoid using the word *I*. For example, they may shift a sentence into the passive: *"It is recommended that you submit a new draft."* when the natural expression would be: *"I recommend you submit a new draft".* Even this is pretty formal. Better option: *"I would suggest you submit a new draft"*, but at least it is authentic language; you can imagine someone saying it. Of course, in some cases, *we* may be used instead of *I,* but in writing the first person plural may come across an inauthentic, impersonal, and even arrogant. Many people know others only through their writing. And the letters one writes can give a very false impression. They can make someone seem hostile instead of friendly, negative instead of affirming. Internally, people notice the style of writing as carefully as they note the style of dress or the way one speaks. In a successful letter, one person is **talking** to another. For that matter, it's a good idea to visualize the reader: just picture him or her sitting across the desk. NS often use narratives since the reader is interested in action: things happening, people, places, events. In general, people are captured by action, by the image of things happening (that's why they prefer TV to radio). To give a feeling of things happening in the sentence, use **action verbs** instead of *be* verbs – verbs that appeal to the senses; especially the sense of sight, movement, energy. NS cut out <u>weak verbs, two-word phrases</u> containing verbs like *make* or *do*, plus a noun. For example: *We <u>made</u> <u>arrangements</u> for….* A better option: *We <u>arranged</u> for ….* NS tend to tighten up writings by employing the simple tenses – the past, present, or future. They're much clearer than the compound tenses – the past progressive, present progressive, or present perfect.

One of the secrets of a successful communication is **enthusiasm**. In an email, it can raise the interest of a skeptical or indifferent reader. Enthusiasm means a keen interest in the reader, the product, the problem. What's his or her background? What's s/he interested in? Can I believe what s/he says? Is s/he trustworthy? Since "the best way to achieve credibility is to avoid the incredible", incredible words, claims, and phrases like: *breathtaking, extraordinary, revolutionary, amazing, exciting, the biggest, the best* should be avoided whenever possible. Once you exaggerate – even a little, here and there – the reader will start to suspect everything you write. Instead of using worn-out superlatives, present facts and details, and let them speak for you. You don't convince people you're great by telling them how great you are. People are so used to the hype, the melodrama – that it's lost its impact. If you want people to believe you, use a low-keyed approach. If you know you're good, you don't have to shout about it. Quiet self-assurance makes you believable **–** in any written message. On the other hand, it's best to express enthusiasm with **words**, and to **avoid** too many **typographic** marks and glyphs, like exclamation points, underlining, or caps (the latter is equal to shouting) [12].

One of the things missing from the printed page is the intonation of speech, the way how you say it, i. e. the emotions. Intonation and pauses are indicated with punctuation. The problem is: dividing units of thought within the sentence. For this we use colons, semi-colons, commas, and double dashes – singly or in pairs. But while NNS use them too conservatively; more according to the grammar book than to improve the clarity, emphasis, or "flow" of a sentence, NS, unlike NNS, employ the double dashes, which are one of the best ways to achieve the seamless flow of speaking. NS tend to use the same style or tone in speaking and writing. Many NNS, however, seem warm, friendly, and encouraging in person or on the phone. But their letters use cold, archaic, impersonal phrases (like *"deem"; "reckon"; "herein"* etc.). Which is the real him or her? What are their true intentions? Perhaps they just have trouble writing letters. Or maybe that is their real personalities coming out. Either way, it makes the messages ambiguous, confusing, and ultimately – less effective, clear and dynamic.

How do you as a writer make yourself believable? For one thing, if you haven't met the reader, don't treat him like an old friend. Don't praise him unless you have good reason to. One should be very careful with words, especially **written**. You can lose someone, with just a careless word or phrase. In a sense, words on paper are more crucial than words in conversation just because letters lack the other communication channels that help clarify the message: the body movements, the facial gestures, the intonation. The proper choice of words can make or break the communication. But letters, including emails, seem to have their own peculiar vocabulary problems: inflated words, legalisms, archaic words; offensive words, certain clichés and jargon, slang and technical words. Let's look at each of these briefly.

Inflated Words. One of the things that puts people off is phrases like:

This is to inform you, or *In response to.* Many writers try to impress their reader with inflated language: multisyllable words or formal phrases Instead of impressing

the addressee, they make him feel that the addressor is not really concerned with his or her needs or problems. So it's a good idea to avoid words and phrases like these: *subsequent to; prior to; in receipt of; deem advisable; awaiting your favorable reply; in response to; attached please find; this is to inform you; with reference to… .*

Legalisms have the same effect. In an effort to make a message sound important, you dehumanize it. Anything that's said in legalese can be said in clear language. Instead of writing: *The undersigned enters into an agreement with the aforementioned party* you can simply say: *Mr. Dwight Williams has signed a contract with the ABC corporation.* Examples of legalisms to be avoided: *attached hereto; attached herewith; hereby advise; pursuant to; the above captioned… .*

Archaic words are words and phrases that haven't been spoken in hundreds of years. Phrases like: *as per* or *beg to advise* simply compound the image of the writer as haughty, cold, and uncaring.

Offensive words. A reader may get into the letter and then be put off by little words that usually cause a negative reaction – something quite unintended by the writer. They are: *apparently, must, urge, mistaken, overlooked, obviously, forgot, neglected, should know; it's quite interesting; there are better ways of doing things.*

Here are more points to consider. Some **culture specific** words and phrases may be tricky. The words *challenge/challenging* are frequently used in English instead of *difficulty/difficult.* Also, the word "*interesting*" (which in English – in many cases – means *"important but somewhat unexpected or strange"*), in Slavic languages conveys not just "so-so," but much higher praise. More examples of similar implicit (hidden) meanings, from *The Economist:*

What the British say: "Very interesting"
What the British mean: "I don't agree/I don't believe you"
What is understood: "They are impressed"

What the British say: "I hear what you say"
What the British mean: "I disagree and do not want to discuss it any further"
What is understood: "He accepts my point of view"

What the British say: "With the greatest respect"
What the British mean: "I think you are wrong (or a fool)"
What is understood: "He is listening to me"

What the British say: "Correct me if I'm wrong"
What the British mean: "I know I'm right – please don't contradict me"
What is understood: "Tell me what you think"

What the British say: "That's not bad"
What the British mean: "That's good or very good"
What is understood: "That's poor or mediocre"

What the British say: "Perhaps you would like to think about… ."/"I would suggest…"/"It would be nice if…"

What the British mean: "This is an order. Do it or be prepared to justify yourself…"

What is understood: "Think about the idea, but do what you like"

What the British say: "Do as much as you think is justified"
What the British mean: "Do it all"
What is understood: "Do what you can"

What the British say: "Oh, by the way/Incidentally…"
What the British mean: "The primary purpose of our discussion is…"
What is understood: "This is not very important…"

What the British say: "I was a bit disappointed that/It is a pity you…"
What the British mean: "I am most upset and cross"
What is understood: "It doesn't really matter"

What the British say: "Could we consider some other options"
What the British mean: "I don't like your idea"
What is understood: "They have not yet decided"

What the British say: "I'll bear it in mind"
What the British mean: "I will do nothing about it"
What is understood: "They will probably do it"

What the British say: "Please think about that some more"
What the British mean: "It's a bad idea: don't do it"
What is understood: "It's a good idea, keep developing it"

What the British say: "I'm sure it's my fault"
What the British mean: "I know it is your fault, please apologize"
What is understood: "It was somebody else's fault"

What the British say: "That is an original point of view"
What the British mean: "You must be mad, or very silly"
What is understood: "They like my ideas!"

What the British say: "I'm sure you'll get there eventually"
What the British mean: "You don't stand a chance in hell"
What is understood: "Keep on trying; they agree I'm on the right track" [13].

The readers of the above mentioned article provided comments and their own examples, providing more cross-cultural cases like this one: "Several years ago,

I was a member of a sales team in the Israeli telecommunications equipment manufacturer where I was working. We made a presentation to British Telecom at their head-office in London, and after our chief engineer had described our technically-advanced new product, the head of the BT team stood up and said "I tend to agree that this could be a good solution for us". So on our return to Israel the chief engineer and I told our managing director that things were looking good. However, a couple of weeks later, our London office manager discovered that the BT team leader had in fact made a recommendation to his management categorically rejecting our product proposal. "I tend to agree" became a company joke, and its meaning was by then well understood by all. "

Another relevant issue is knowing the correct meaning of certain questions, that only *look* like questions:

You don't seem to know this fact, do you?	*inquiry*
Do you mind if I asked my PhD students to attend the conference?	*asking permission*
Why don't you go there?	*advice*
Why don't we do it together?	*suggestion*
Won't it be better for us to do it together?	

We've borrowed three email texts requesting deadline extension by NNS and NS for our analysis from the appendix to the course paper by Shawn Ford "A Cross-sectional Study of Pragmatic Usage in making Academic E-mail Requests" [14]. We've chosen texts typical of NNS and NS and singled out the following linguistic and stylistic features by marking them in the following way:

apt word choice
<u>politeness devices</u>
inappropriate word choice
<u>stylistic errors</u>
<u>grammar mistake(s)</u>

NNS mail request

Dear Dr. Peterson

I am *Subject's Name*, <u>one of your student</u> in History 200. <u>I sent you an email because **I have a problem** doing it. You know I am an immigrant student who came here two years ago and **I have** a little **difficulty** in understanding the book.</u> I already<u> finish</u> reading the book and starting to do the book report, <u>which</u>

NS mail request

Dr. Peterson

My name is *Subject's Name* and I'm in your HIS 614 class. Although I know the article critique is due next week, ***<u>I'm wondering if I could</u>*** have ***a few extra*** days to finish the paper. ***I've become extremely interested in the topic*** and have been doing ***additional research*** to ***better understand*** the writer's position.

is due next week. However, I am **still** on the introduction and I am **struggling** to continue it. **I don't think** that I can finish it and turn it in by the due date. **I need** more time to do the book report.

So if you could please give me an extension to finish my book report.

I hope you understand.

Thank You for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Subject's Name

Hello, Dr. Peterson.

This is *Subject's Name,* UH student in your 200-level History class. Today I'd like to get your acceptance to extense turning in my book report. I'd like to spend more time to finish it. May I turn in it by the end of the next week?

I'm sorry about it. **Please reply** to e-mail.

Thank you.

While it's been ***rewarding***, I've found it consumed more time than I anticipated. ***Please let me know if*** an extension is ***possible***.

Thank you.
Subject's Name

We've compiled the list of linguistic e-politeness devices that were found to be most helpful, especially in making requests:

I was wondering if ...	*I wonder ...*
Please let me know if … *is possible.*	*Please reply ...* *I look forward / Looking forward to hearing from you soon.* *Hoping to hear from you soon*
I would like to ...	*I want to ...*
I'm hoping ...	*I hope ...*
I've attached … / Attached is/are …/ Here is … . *Could you please take a look at ... .*	*I'm sending ...* *Please find attached ...* *Can you please take a look at ...*

I would appreciate it if you could… I would appreciate any comments / suggestions / feedback.	~~Can you ... .~~
Please ***let me know* what** you think. Do you think I am on the right track?	***~~Let me know~~***
I'm having difficult time ...	*I ~~don't think~~*... *I ~~am unable~~* ...
I was wondering if it would be possible …	*~~I can't~~* ... *~~It is impossible~~*...
I was wondering if I could have a few extra days to …	*I ~~need~~* ...
challenging task	*I ~~have a problem~~* ...
… to better understand …	*I ~~don't understand~~*
Thanks for taking a look.	*~~Thanks anyway. /~~* *~~Anyway, thank you for~~....*
Thanks a lot. *Many thanks. / Many, many thanks.*	
Thank you for / I will be grateful for *any help you can provide.*	*~~Thank you for your kind consideration.~~* *~~Thank you for your understanding.~~* *~~Thank you in advance~~*
I will appreciate your help with this *situation.*	*~~for your attention to this matter /~~* *~~for any help you can provide.~~*
Best wishes, *All the best.*	*~~Sincerely(yours)/ Yours sincerely~~* *~~Truly yours /Yours truly~~*

E-mails are a "kind" of letter, but there's obviously something different about them. In some ways, they are half-way between writing and speaking. Basically, they're a little more formal than speaking, and a bit less formal than writing. Last but not least: proper structuring of an email is also important, which means breaking the text into smaller chunks.

Summing it all up, we'd like to emphasize several suggestions for writing e-mails, since they are the most popular form of written communication today. It's a good idea to always write a subject line, to avoid using *–ing* phrases in openings and closings, cold, impersonal voice, inflated words, legalisms, negative-sounding statements (four-point formula might help a lot). One should use relevant

punctuation, vivid language (like action verbs) and – preferably – simple tenses, effective openings and closings, as well as relevant emphasizers. Proofreading the messages is a must. When you're writing to a *group* of people, use the BCC field, in order to keep people's addresses private. Start with a personal greeting if it is appropriate. Don't mark a message *high priority* or *urgent* unless it really *is*. Don't send long documents in the e-mail itself. Instead, add them as an attachment. Be sure to mention the attachment in the body of the letter. It is often a good policy to refer to the previous message. Some messages are more appropriate in person or as a paper letter; for example: thank-you notes, certain requests (say, a raise in salary, or a promotion) etc. You never know who might see it. Moreover, any writing may be saved and could be used as part of a legal suit. It seems like good idea to avoid humor and sarcasm for fear of offending the addressee. Humor can be dangerous; especially if there's no *personal* contact with the reader. Again, it's all about cultural congruence and rhetorical sensitivity.

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