

Email writing

Topic

Writing a semi-formal email

Learning outcomes

- Say what a semi-formal email is and when it is appropriate.
- Express what we should and shouldn't do when we write a semi-formal email.
- Write a semi-formal email to a tourist information office.

Age and level

13-17, Adults (B1)

Time

Approximately 90 minutes or two 45-minute lessons

Materials

- Cut-up emails from Appendix 1 **OR** Student Worksheet 1
- Student Worksheet 2
- (Optional) scissors

Introduction

The focus of this lesson is writing semi-formal emails. At the start of the lesson, learners are made aware of what a semi-formal email is and when it is appropriate. They then read two example emails – one which is appropriate for the situation and one which is not. They use the emails to create a list of what we should and shouldn't do when we write a semi-formal email. In the second half of the lesson, they prepare and write a semi-formal email to a tourist information office. If it's appropriate, learners can send the email to the real office to see if they get a reply.

Procedure

<p>1. Lead-in: Different kinds of emails (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners if they ever write emails, and who they write emails to. If they don't ever write emails, ask them if they can think of situations where others might write emails (e.g. parents / professionals at work). • Make a list on the board of suggestions. Depending on the age of your learners, these might include: to ask a teacher about an exam; to apply to be a volunteer / for a job; to ask about scholarship opportunities; to send information about a club; to say thank you to a relative or friend for a gift; to give some news to a relative or friend; to make reservations etc. • If learners have not made the following suggestion, add it: to find out information about a course. • Ask learners to say which of the emails would be more informal (e.g. to a friend), and which would be semi-formal (e.g. to a work colleague). Explain what a semi-formal email is: an email to communicate with people you do not know well; it is neutral in style – not formal and not informal; it is typically simple and concise. • Tell the class that they are going to practise writing semi-formal emails in this lesson.
<p>2. Ordering example emails (10-15 mins)</p>	<p>Use one of the following options depending on the resources you have / size of your class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: Before the lesson, make copies of Email 1 and Email 2 in Appendix 1 at the end of this lesson plan. Cut both emails into strips and then put them in one envelope. You'll need one set for each pair or small group of learners. • Option 2: Give learners a copy of the Student Worksheet 1. You can make copies for each learner, pair or small group. Learners can either cut the strips with scissors, or they can separate / order the emails using numbers and letters. • Tell learners that the envelope / worksheet has lines from two different emails. In both emails, a student is asking about summer language courses. They must first separate the emails, then put the lines in the correct order. If your learners need help, provide the first lines of each email. Walk around the room and help learners if necessary.

- Show or give learners **Student Worksheet 2** so they can check their work.
No-printing alternative: If you don't have resources to print the emails in Appendix 1 or Student Worksheets 1/2, you can skip this part of the lesson and move directly to the next part.

3. How to write a semi-formal email (20 mins)

- Make sure learners have a copy of **Student Worksheet 2** or display Student Worksheet 2 using a projector or IWB. If learners did not do the previous activity (ordering emails), give them time to read the emails.
- Ask learners:
 - Why is the writer sending the email? (To find out about summer language courses)
 - Which of the emails is more appropriate for this situation? (Email 1: Request for information about summer courses)
- Write the following table on the board for learners to copy:

Semi-formal email: Dos	Semi-formal email: Don'ts

- Explain that learners should compare the two emails and note what we should / shouldn't do when we write a **semi-formal** email. Check understanding by asking them to make 3-4 suggestions and add them to the appropriate column.
- In pairs / small groups, learners compare the emails and add notes to the table. Walk around as they work, helping where necessary. Give them about 10 minutes to do this.
- Ask learners to suggest dos and don'ts and add them to the table on the board. You can refer to or show the completed table in **Appendix 2** at the end of this lesson plan. The list is not exhaustive and learners may have made other relevant suggestions to add.

Note: If you are teaching two shorter lessons, this could be the end of Lesson 1.

4. Preparing to write a semi-formal email (15 mins)

- Tell learners that they are going to write a semi-formal email. They will send an email to a tourist information office to find out about a place they'd like to visit.
- Ask them to say what kind of information they'd like to know before they visit / travel somewhere, e.g.: weather, accommodation, trips and activities, transport, places to eat and drink, history etc.
- Put learners into pairs and tell them to imagine that they are going on a trip – it can be anywhere in the world! Ask them to decide a place, and then to make notes of the information that they would like to know before they make their trip.
- Ask a few pairs to say where they have chosen, and some of the information that they would like to know.
- Explain that learners will write a semi-formal email to the relevant tourist information office for their trip. Remind them that they will ask for information in the email. If necessary, you can help learners with language they might need:
 - Ask how they might open / sign-off a semi-formal email, and write examples on the board:
 Openings: Dear Mr / Ms (if you know the name), Good morning / afternoon, Hello
 Sign-offs: Best / Kind regards, Regards, With best wishes, With many thanks
 - Ask what phrases they might use to say why they're writing: I'm writing to... / I'm writing because / I've got a few questions.../ Could you answer a few questions?

5. Writing and proof-reading a semi-formal email (25 mins)

- In pairs, learners draft their emails. Remind them that they can use the example of the semi-formal email in Student Worksheet 2. Display it if necessary. They should also think about the dos and don'ts that they noted earlier. Walk around as they work, helping with any problems.
- As pairs finish, get them to swap / show each other their drafts. They should give each other feedback. You can also move around, helping as many pairs as possible.

**6. Sending the
email
(5-10 mins)**

- If possible, learners find the email address of the relevant tourist information office and send their email. They may receive a reply!
- Alternatively, they can send / give their email to another pair of learners. For homework, that pair can research (or invent) the information – and reply to the original pair.

Contributed by

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Appendix 1: Cut up Email 1 and Email 2. Put strips for both emails in one envelope.**Email 1**

..... ✂

Subject: Request for information about summer courses

..... ✂

Dear Mr. Jones,

..... ✂

I'm a university student from Finland and I'm writing to get some information about your language courses this summer. I've got a few questions:

..... ✂

1. Do you do a course for university students which helps them with their essay writing skills?

..... ✂

2. How many hours a week are the courses?

..... ✂

3. What sort of accommodation do you offer?

..... ✂

4. What after-school activities are there?

..... ✂

5. Do you do any trips to other towns in the UK?

..... ✂

I'm hoping to come over in June, so if you can get back to me as soon as possible, it would be great. Thanks for your help.

..... ✂

Best regards,

Jaana Nikkinen

..... ✂

Email 2

..... ✂

Subject: Hello!

..... ✂

Hi Jack!!!

..... ✂

My name's Jaana and I'M FROM FINLAND!!! I bet you haven't had students from here B4 ;-) ;-)

..... ✂

That's probably coz we're so amazing at languages that we don't need any xtra help? except me – I need all the help I can get!!

..... ✂

Probably cos I just like watching films most of the time instead of studying. I really wanna be a film director and live in Hollywood so I have to watch as much as possible to get ideas for my movies.

..... ✂

Actually, don't tell anyone, but I'm actually quite a good student? but if anyone found out, my reputation would be ruined, so shhhhhh!!)

..... ✂

BTW do u do courses for uni students?

..... ✂

How many lessons/week? Is there any extra stuff after school, SO I CAN MEET SOME COOL PEOPLE? How about trips?

..... ✂

Give me all the info you can, man.

..... ✂

Jaana (although all my mates call me Jakki!!)

..... ✂

Appendix 2: Writing a semi-formal email

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an informative subject line, which clearly says what the email is about. • Write the most important information first. • Use numbers and bullet points to make the message clearer. • Use simple grammar. Avoid things like the passive. (As emails are a fast means of communication, they tend to be less wordy and complex than formal letters.) • Write short sentences. • Use paragraphs to keep the email clear and easy to understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write 'hello' as your subject line. • Write about irrelevant issues. The reader will soon hit 'delete' if the email doesn't get to the point. • Give personal information that you don't want anyone else to know. (The email could end up in the wrong hands.) • Use capital letters to write whole words - in emails this is considered shouting. • Use different fonts in the email (the recipient's computer may not be compatible). • Use Italics (the reason may be misunderstood, due to cultural differences). • Use exclamation marks. • Use abbreviations like 'coz' and 'uni', as the recipient may not understand them. • Use acronyms like BTW for the same reason. • Use emoticons. They may be misunderstood and come across as unprofessional.