

Functional Skills

English

Level 1 Writing W3b

Use Format and Structure Suitable for Purpose
and Audience

V2

Functional Skills English:

Level 1

Skill Standard:

Writing W3b

Coverage and Range:

Learners should be aware that:

'The degree of formality, complexity and detail is determined by the audience, the purpose and the setting (for example how to format a formal letter when applying for a job, using headings and subheadings when writing a short report.'¹

Things You Need to Know:

- The **format** of a text refers to its appearance and layout.
- The **structure** of a text refers to the organisation of its content.

Structuring and Formatting a Text

It is important that when you structure and format a text you do so with the intended audience in mind. For example, you would not write an application letter in the same format as you would write to a friend. Nor would the two letters be structured in the same way. The difference between these two letters is because of *formality*.

Formality affects two types of writing:

- **Formal** writing is typically used for official purposes and follows a strict set of stylistic, structural and formatting rules that determine how a text should be written and laid out.
- **Informal** writing is used for personal purposes and does not have any strict rules in terms of its style, structure or format.

Here is a short example of **formal** writing:

Dear Mr Chekov

I am writing to you in regards of your complaint about our health spa. We will be examining the issues your letter has raised.

Thank you for taking the time to bring these problems to my attention.

Yours sincerely

P. Gorky

Here is an example of **informal** writing:

Hi Mum. Hope everything is going well? I'm loving life here in the big city. Am doing very well. Feel free to come down and visit whenever you fancy it. Much love XX

Exercise 1

Before looking at how to structure different texts depending on their formality, it is important that you are able to recognise when a text should be formal or informal.

1. Decide whether the following texts should be **formal** or **informal**:
 - a. A text to your friend. **Informal / Formal**
 - b. A letter of complaint to a business. **Informal / Formal**
 - c. An email booking a holiday. **Informal / Formal**
 - d. An email to a family member. **Informal / Formal**
 - e. An essay or report. **Informal / Formal**

Exercise 2

Although the ways an email can be structured do not differ as much as other texts when writing formally or informally, there are a few differences that you must bear in mind when typing one.

An **informal email** does not have a strict format or structure. However, they typically look like the example below:

Subject: A subject gives the reader a brief idea of what you're writing about. In informal emails you don't always have to have one though.



Hi

How's it going? I was wondering if you fancied going to see a band sometime next month? There's a few decent ones playing at the local arena.

Contact me if you want to come.

Oh yeah, I've got that CD you asked me to pick up for you too. I'll swing by after work to drop it off.

Thanks!

Greeting: Typically, an informal email begins with a relaxed and informal greeting (*hi, hey, etc.*) However, even this is not always necessary.

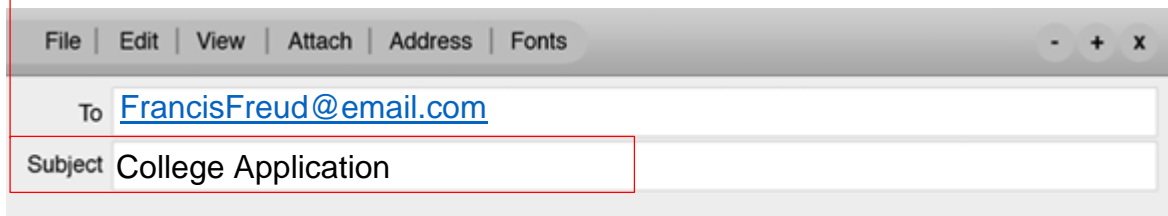
Closing: Often, but not always, an informal email has an appropriate ending / closing (*thanks, cheers, etc.*)

Content: You are entirely free to structure the content of an informal email in whatever way you want.

[Is there a way of making this interactive, so information is revealed as the learner clicks on each section?]

As the previous example has shown, there are no strict conventions that govern the structure or format of an **informal email**. In contrast, a **formal email** has several conventions that should be followed in order to ensure that it is suitable for its purpose and audience. An example is shown below:

Subject: A subject is needed. It should be short and state clearly what the email is about.



Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you to express my interest in the Fine Art course starting at your college next September.

I am keenly interested in all aspects of art, including its history, theory and creation. I feel that I would benefit greatly by undertaking further study in this direction.

Could you please forward me the necessary information to help me apply for this course, as well as any entry requirements?

Yours faithfully

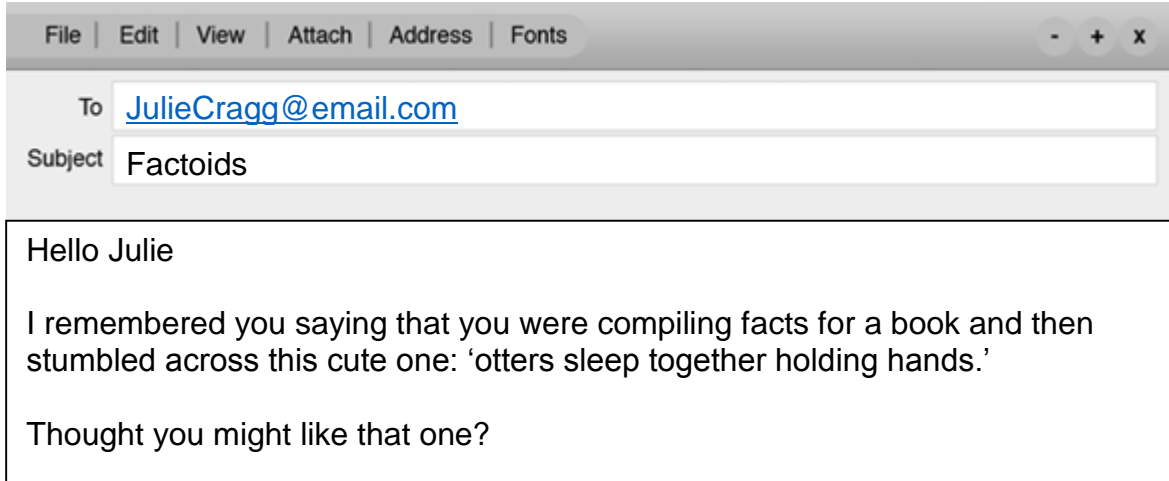
Salvador Rothko.

Greeting: A formal greeting is needed: use the recipient's title (Mr, Mrs, Miss, etc.) if you know their name. If not, use 'Sir or Madam'.

Closing: A formal letter must have a closing. Typically, these are either: 'Yours sincerely' if you know the recipient's name or 'Yours faithfully' if you do not.

Content: The structure of a formal email should follow set patterns. After the greeting (see blue box), the content of the email should be ordered logically, so that the purpose of the email is written first, followed by the main point of the email, and then any additional details. Finally, the email must be signed off in the correct manner (see purple box).

1. Decide whether the following emails' structures and formatting are informal or formal. Circle your answers.



File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts

To JulieCragg@email.com

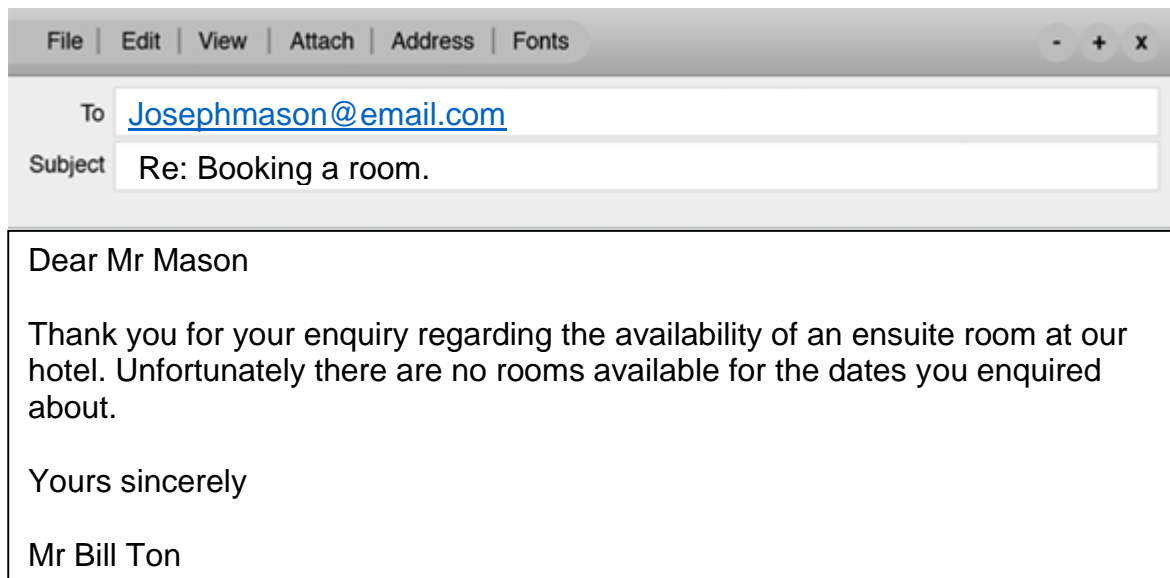
Subject Factoids

Hello Julie

I remembered you saying that you were compiling facts for a book and then stumbled across this cute one: 'otters sleep together holding hands.'

Thought you might like that one?

- a. Is the email above **informal** or **formal**?



File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts

To Josephmason@email.com

Subject Re: Booking a room.

Dear Mr Mason

Thank you for your enquiry regarding the availability of an ensuite room at our hotel. Unfortunately there are no rooms available for the dates you enquired about.

Yours sincerely

Mr Bill Ton

- b. Is the email above **informal** or **formal**?

File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts

To Supersavingmarkets@email.com

Subject Service complaint

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you to complain about the service I received whilst at your store. Last Friday I tried to buy a mobile phone from your store, but unfortunately I wasn't able to buy one because a member of your staff was busy texting on her own phone. When I apologised for interrupting, telling her that I was busy and needed to buy the phone soon, she said: 'I'm very sorry you came here when you're busy. Did you know we're open 24 hours a day?'

I did not buy the phone and left feeling very angry and disappointed. I will not be returning to your store.

Yours faithfully

V. Mildrew

c. Is the email above **informal** or **formal**?

File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts

To Poshnoshrestaurant@email.co.uk

Subject

Dear Mr S. Cargot

I was hoping to book a table at your restaurant sometime this next week, ideally between 7pm and 10pm. Is this possible?

Please contact me and let me know.

Mr Creosote

d. Is the email above **informal** or **formal**?

2. Complete the formal email below using only the suitable information given to you.

Dear Sir or Madam

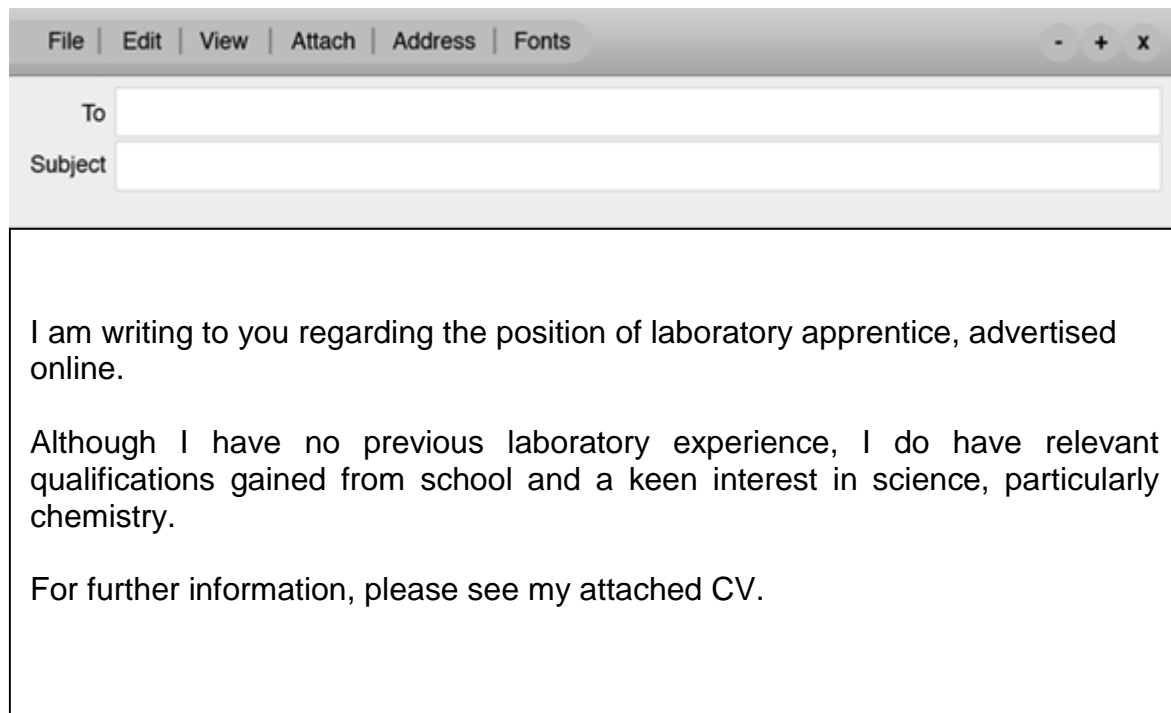
Hello

Yours faithfully

Job Application

Moreaulabs@email.com

Yours sincerely



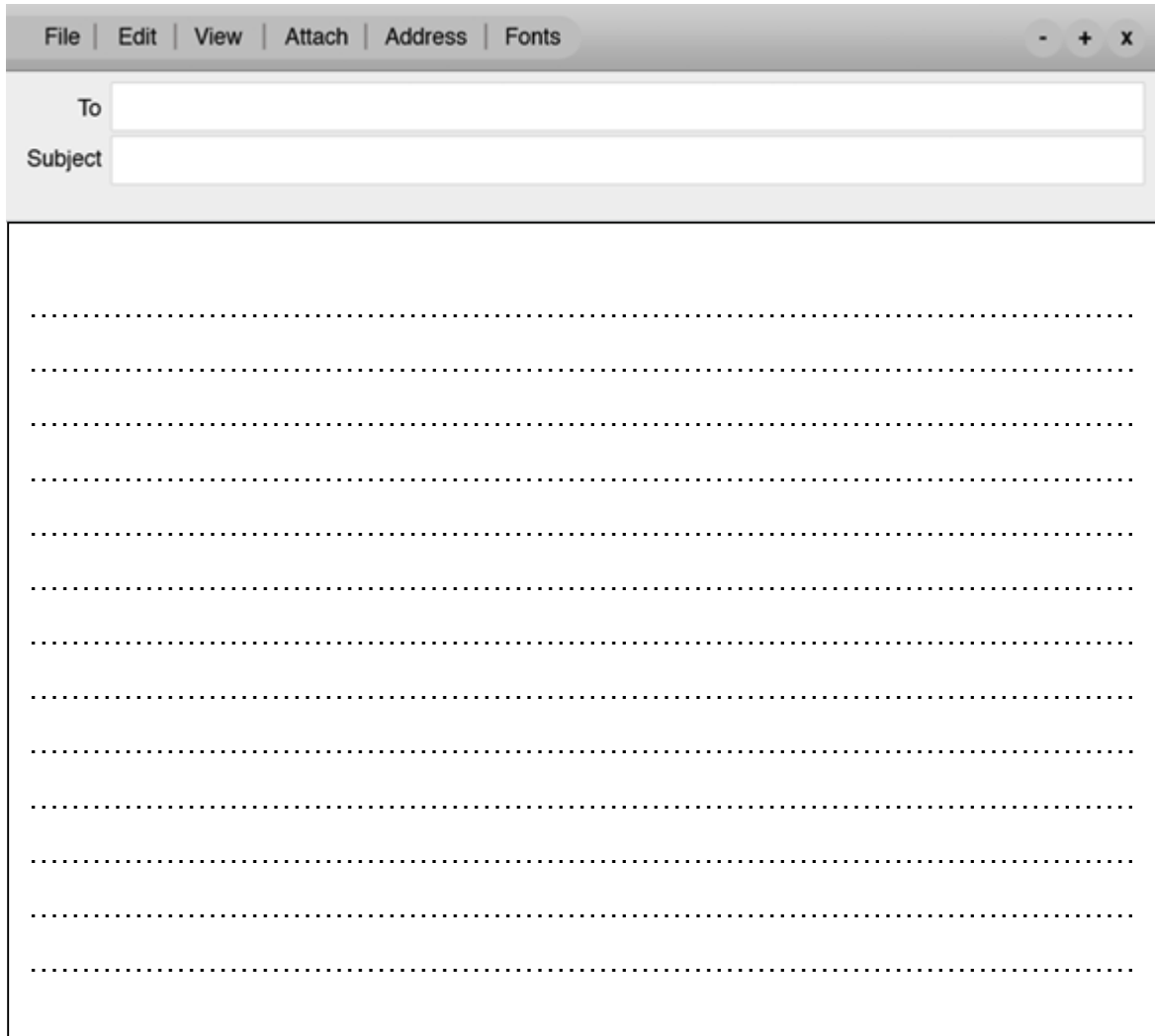
The screenshot shows an email client window with a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Attach, Address, Fonts) and window control buttons (-, +, x). The 'To' field is empty, and the 'Subject' field is empty. The main body of the email contains the following text:

I am writing to you regarding the position of laboratory apprentice, advertised online.

Although I have no previous laboratory experience, I do have relevant qualifications gained from school and a keen interest in science, particularly chemistry.

For further information, please see my attached CV.

3. Write a **formal** email below complaining of poor quality service at a local restaurant. Pay particular attention to the format and structure of the email. When you have finished, ask your tutor to mark your work.



The image shows a simulated email composition window. At the top, there is a menu bar with the following options: File | Edit | View | Attach | Address | Fonts. On the right side of the menu bar are three window control icons: a minus sign (-), a plus sign (+), and an 'x' for closing. Below the menu bar, there are two input fields: 'To' and 'Subject'. The 'To' field is empty, and the 'Subject' field is also empty. Below these fields is a large rectangular area for writing the email body. This area is filled with horizontal dotted lines to guide the student's handwriting.

Exercise 3

In contrast to an email, the differences in structure and format between an informal and formal letter are more considerable.

For example, look at the **informal** letter below:

Return Address: An informal letter sometimes has, but does not require, a return address (your address) in the top right corner.

52 Teacup Street
Grimsby
Yorkshire
DN12 9GT

Hi Kristie

I thought I'd write a few lines to say hello and see how you are doing as it's been such a long time since we last talked. Are you still thinking of going travelling? A friend of mine recently went backpacking around Morocco and says he had a wonderful time. Is that somewhere you'd consider?

Write to me when you get chance.

Many thanks

Sam

Greeting: As with informal emails, an informal letter often starts with an informal greeting.

Closing: An informal closing is often used in an informal letter.

Content: As with informal emails, the content of an informal letter can be structured in any way, shape or form. However, it is a good idea to have *some* structure in your letter as this helps the reader understand the general point.

In contrast, a formal letter has a rigid set of conventions when it comes to the format and structure of the text. A common format for a formal letter is shown below, and would be suitable for you to use when sending formal letters such as job applications.

Please be aware, however, that organisations often use their own house style. A common style used by organisations is the left block format, where the whole text is left aligned.

Greeting: A formal greeting is essential. Dear Sir or Madam should be used if the name of recipient is not known.

Date: The date should be shown here.

Recipient's Address: The recipient's address must be placed on the left hand side of the letter, above the greeting.

Return Address: The sender's address must be placed here.

British Museum
Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3DG

52 Teacup Street
Grimsby
Yorkshire
DN12 9GT

Dear Sir or Madam

28/11/20__

RE: Possible Roman Statue

I have recently discovered at the bottom of my pond a small headless statue. I think I have been able to identify it as the Roman Emperor Commodus by using the internet and comparing torsos.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would send an expert to verify the authenticity of my find and then, perhaps, we could discuss a price for the museum to purchase it.

Yours faithfully

Edward Simpson

Subject: A subject could be written here, preferably with 'RE' in front, which means *regarding*. However, the letter's subject could also be referred to in the opening paragraph.

Content: The content must be logically structured and formally written.

Closing: A closing must be used. If 'Dear Sir or Madam' is used as the greeting, then 'Yours faithfully' must be used as the closing. If the recipient's name is known, use 'Yours sincerely' instead.

1. Match the following formatting and structural features of a *formal* letter to their descriptions below. The first one is done for you.

Dear Sir or Madam	This is placed on the top left hand side of the letter, though below the level of the sender's address.
Recipient's Address	This is placed on the right hand side below the sender's address, and informs the reader of <i>when</i> the letter was sent.
Date	Formal greeting for when you do not know the recipient's name, for example if you are writing to a company.
Yours sincerely	Placed below the greeting; it informs the recipient what the letter is about.
Subject	At the bottom of the letter, used only when you know the recipient's name.

Exercise 4

Some types of text are always formal. For example, reports are always formal in structure and format, as there is no informal situation that would require a report.

Although the structure and format of a report is not as rigid as a formal letter and can change depending on the topic of the report, they do follow some basic principles, which are as follows:

- **First**, the purpose of the report must be made clear. This tells the reader what the report will be discussing.
- **Secondly**, the report must discuss the details of the topic to make the issues raised and discussed clear.
- **Finally**, the report should reach a conclusion or recommendation.

Here is an example of a typical short report:

Title: The title needs to be short and concise to clearly inform the reader of the report's topic.

A Report into Dress Codes and Productivity

Issue

This report will discuss whether dress codes in business and education increase productivity.

The Facts

From our research, dress codes had a direct impact on an individual's productivity, especially in lower education. However, whether an individual wore a tie or not seemed to make only a marginal difference, if any.

Conclusion

In conclusion, dress codes in business and education do seem to make a difference to productivity and therefore this report recommends the maintenance of such codes.

Sub-Title: These signpost the report to the reader, informing them of the topic of each paragraph. They should be as short as possible.

Content: The content of the report should be clear and brief and stick to the divisions of the sub-titles.

CVS

Another type of document that has a relatively strict structure and format is a CV. A good CV is a very important tool for helping you get a job. Typically they are organised as below:

Antoni Bojko
71 Marlborough Street
Birmingham
B19 4XU
Mobile: 01234 567 890

Profile

I am a hardworking and ambitious sales assistant. I am computer literate and have a good knowledge of Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Access. I am capable of working independently or as a team member, and am not afraid of responsibility.

I have worked in a variety of positions where I have gained many transferable skills. I feel that a position where I would be expected to work as part of a well organised retail team would be ideal for me.

Education and Training

2001 – 2006: The Manor School, Coalfield, Nottinghamshire.

Qualifications

2006: 9 GCSEs including English and Mathematics (A – C)

Experience

March 2009 – to date: Supermarket Saver, St. John's Street, Mansfield, Cashier/Customer Service Assistant. Main responsibilities:

- processing purchases and refunding customers
- monitoring stock movements
- writing reports for suppliers

In addition, I also assist at the weekly play day with art and craft activities, and story-time, which provides good practice for interacting with people of all ages

Hobbies

My favourite hobby is travelling. I have travelled all around the UK and many parts of Europe, and I feel that these experiences have greatly broadened my world view. I also regularly play squash and go running at weekends.