

## Writing emails. What takes you too long?

Are you frustrated about the amount of time it takes you to write an email in English? If so, it's certainly worth taking a closer look to find out where exactly you lose too much time. Use this checklist to do just that.

- Go through each of the following areas in turn. I've given a brief explanation of each and, *in italics*, examples of what might be going through your mind.
- If you have no problems in an area move on to the next. But if you do, take time to pinpoint **exactly** what holds you up. It may well be something other than the aspects I've mentioned. Make a few notes as you go.
- When you've dealt with all the points, look at your notes and identify what you need to work on in order to write emails faster.

### Getting started

You know you need to write the email. But you can't bring yourself to sit down and do it. You keep putting it off.

*Just one cup of coffee before I start.*

*This is going to take ages, I might as well write my German mails first.*

Your notes:

## Gathering the information you need

This could be a general question of how organized you are. Do you have all the information you need at your fingertips or do you have to interrupt the thinking and writing process to check details?

*What were the dates again? Where's my diary?*

*Peter sent an email about this a few weeks ago. Where is it?*

Or you may waste a lot of time because other people need several reminders before they supply details which are essential for your mail.

*I need to speak to Jack before I write this, but he's never available.*

*Why hasn't Pat got back to me with the information I asked for?*

Your notes:

## Deciding on the best approach to take

With awkward topics – e.g. if you have to give negative feedback or pass on unwelcome news – you need to decide on the best approach to take and find the right tone. This can be really time-consuming.

*Should I start with the positive aspects or does that weaken my message?*

*How do I phrase this so that it's clear how serious I am, but not aggressive?*

Your notes:

## Organizing the contents

It can be quite a challenge to find a way of presenting the topic so clearly that misunderstandings are avoided and the recipient knows what action you would like.

*Where on earth should I start?*

*Would it be better to change these two paragraphs around?*

*Have I made it clear what the next step is?*

Your notes:

## Deciding how to begin or end your mail

Perhaps you're uncertain whether you should use a new contact's first or last name.

*If I write "Hi Sue" I might come across as overfamiliar. But if I write "Dear Ms Brown" I might seem too distant or cold.*

*Is it Ms or Mrs?*

Or maybe you don't like using the same ending over and over again, but don't know what else would be appropriate.

*Would "Bye for now" be ok here?*

*John often writes "Cheers", but is it appropriate in this case?*

Your notes:

## Getting grammar and vocabulary right

If you're not very confident about your English and/or are currently taking English lessons, you spend a lot of time thinking about the tenses you've used, for example.

*Present perfect or simple past? Now what were the rules?*

*Should that be the present continuous or present simple?*

Even if your English is very good, if you have high expectations of how you express yourself, you may find yourself going over your mail again and again to see what you could improve.

*I've used that word twice already, what would be an alternative?*

*That sentence sounds a bit clumsy. How can I change it?*

Your notes:

## Pressing "send"

And finally, hitting the send button can take time, too. Especially if your mail is going to a lot of people or concerns an important topic.

*Is it good enough – will it make a good impression?*

*Will this mail lead to the action I want?*

*I know what I mean, but will the recipient?*

Your notes: