

01. LAYOUT (HEADER)

The header of an e-mail includes the sender, recipient (*Empfänger*) and subject. Begin with the word **"FROM"**, followed by a colon (*Doppelpunkt*). Then mention the sender, which is usually you, unless you need to assume (*annehmen*) another person's identity. You can either note down an e-mail address - if it isn't provided in the task, invent one - or use the sender's name underlined. If you choose the latter (*das Letztgenannte*), it implies (*bedeuten*) that the e-mail program you use has saved an e-mail under that name.

The next line starts with **"TO"** followed by a colon. Here you mention the recipient of the e-mail. This is the person you are writing to. The subject comes last. Write **"SUBJECT"** followed by a colon. If you are responding to an e-mail, write **"RE"** plus colon and the original subject line. If you are initiating (*starten*) communication with someone without any prior (*vorherig*) correspondence, you must not do this!

Remember, always write the first word after the colon small unless it is a proper noun (*Eigen-name*). Here is an example: **"SUBJECT: college visit"**. If the subject includes a proper noun, the first letter must of course be capitalised, as in **"SUBJECT: London's must-see sights"**.

02. LAYOUT (GREETING & SIGN-OFF)

In a formal e-mail, the greeting formula starts with **"Dear"**. This is then followed by the name of the person you are writing to, such as **"Dear Mr Webster"**. Use **"Dear Sir / Madam"** or the phrase **"To whom it may concern"** if you do not know the recipient (*Empfänger*). This is quite common when writing to a general contact found on a website or when applying (*sich bewerben*) for a job.

Now, it's important to include a comma after the name or phrase. Unlike in German, you must not use an exclamation mark (*Rufzeichen*)! Make sure to leave an empty line next. Then, take care! The first word of the introduction is always capitalised in an English e-mail. For example, **"Dear John ... Sorry"** - big letter - **"that I haven't written for ages"**.

For the sign-off, only **"sincerely"** and **"faithfully"** are used in formal e-mails. Use **"sincerely"** if the recipient's name is known, whereas **"faithfully"** if it is not known. For instance, you would write, **"Dear Ms Pilkington"** ... and then as a sign-off **"Yours sincerely"**. If the recipient is not known - that means, it is not given in the writing task - you have to use **"Yours faithfully"**. Again make sure that you use a comma after these sign-off phrases. **"Yours sincerely"** - comma - or, in order to mention another example, **"Yours faithfully"** - again followed by a comma.

When it comes to titles, you can use **"Mr"** for just about anyone. For women, stick with **"Ms"** /'mɪz/ - whether they are married or not. But if you know for sure a woman is married, then **"Mrs"** /'mɪsɪz/ is the way to go. Oh, and just so you know, you can write these titles with or without a period (*Punkt*) - like **"Mr."** with a period or **"Mr"** without one.

A final tip! You can leave out the comma after **"Dear"** and **"Yours"** in less formal situations or when e-mailing colleagues at work. However, here's the catch (*Haken*)! If you decide to drop (*weglassen*) the

comma in the greeting formula, you must also leave it out after "*Yours sincerely*" and "*Yours faithfully*". Just be sure to stay consistent (*einheitlich*)!

03. LAYOUT (MAIN BODY)

Alright, let's break down the main body (*Hauptteil*) of an e-mail! Ideally, a formal e-mail should consist of five paragraphs. And yes, I mean five! Start with a short introduction, around one and a half lines, follow up with three paragraphs of roughly equal (*gleich*) length and close with a brief ending phrase like "*I look forward to hearing from you*".

Let's now deal with the three main paragraphs! It's really good practice to start each with an introductory sentence. This makes it easier to move from one aspect to the next, clearly showing the reader what's coming up. For example, a sentence like "*Now let's move on to my school career! So far I've been to primary school and then I went to ...*" effectively signals that the following section will cover your educational journey (*schulischer Bildungsverlauf*). Similarly, by starting a paragraph with "*Having looked at some strengths, I would now like to address some of my weaknesses*", you're preparing the reader for a shift in focus (*Verlagerung des Schwerpunkts*). Such introductory sentences - and again, many can be found in the writing lab - serve as helpful signposts (*Wegweiser*), guiding the reader through your e-mail in a logical and coherent (*schlüssig*) manner.

04. LANGUAGE & STYLE

To keep your writing formal, it's important not to use casual (*leger*) expressions. One simple way to do so is to avoid contractions¹. Now, what are contractions, you ask? They're shorter forms of words or phrases. Instead of writing "*I'm*" or "*can't*", you should write "*I am*" and "*cannot*" in a formal e-mail. This makes your writing sound more professional.

In formal writing, it's best to stay away from slang or casual language. For example, instead of calling an author's style "*pretty awesome*", you might say it's "*very elaborate (raffiniert)*". If something catches your interest a lot, instead of saying "*it's way more interesting*", you could say "*it is much more interesting*". Instead of "*kind of great*", or even worse "*kinda great*", it's more professional to say "*somewhat remarkable*". "*My experience leading different projects has equipped me with a somewhat remarkable ability to deal with complex challenges successfully.*"

And now let's address (*thematisieren*) another important aspect! Phrasal verbs², while common in everyday English, can often make formal writing seem way too casual. A key guideline is to avoid them! For instance, if you encounter (*begegnen*) an advertisement by chance (*zufällig*), express it as "*I found it by accident*" rather than using the phrasal verb "*came across*". And another example! Instead of saying the meeting was "*called off*" due to unforeseen (*unerwartet*) circumstances (*Umstand*), write

¹ Contractions are a way to shorten words or phrases by combining them and often using an apostrophe to show where letters have been left out.

² Phrasal verbs are phrases that combine a verb with one or more prepositions. This then changes the original meaning of the verb.

the meeting was "cancelled". The verb "to cancel" serves as a formal alternative to the informal phrasal verb.

Politeness is crucial (*äußerst wichtig*) in formal communication. Increase your usage of "would" and "could" significantly compared to how you might in German. For example, rather than a too direct "Send me a catalogue!", a more polite request would be, "It would be very nice if you could send me a catalogue." And in place of a command like, "Answer me by Friday!", a gentler (*freundlicher*) one would be, "If it were possible, an answer by Friday would be appreciated."

To conclude, here are several phrases that add an additional touch of politeness: "I was hoping you could ... / I was wondering if you could ... / Do you think you might be able to ... / Would it be all right with you if ... / I thought it might be a good idea to ..." Using such phrases in your formal e-mails not only improves your level of professionalism but also introduces a degree of politeness.

05. COMMON MISTAKES

A common mistake among German speakers is using the phrase "I look forward to hear from you soon". It's important to use the gerund form, which is the base form of the verb plus *-ing*, after "look forward to". So, the right way to say it is "I look forward to hearing from you soon". By the way, in formal situations, we use "I look forward to" - present simple. In more casual settings, it's okay to say "I am looking forward to" - present progressive.

When it comes to prepositions for contact details, don't say "contact me under". The appropriate (*entsprechend*) prepositions for phone numbers are as follows: "You can reach me by calling at / on ..." and then state your number. Or you can say to get in touch via phone, "I can be contacted at / on ...". For e-mail communications "I am available at ..." - and then state your e-mail address. Equally nice would be saying the following to initiate (*starten*) contact via e-mail, "Please send your message to ...".