

# Writing Professional Emails

## Basic components

The basic components of a professional email are:

- Email address
- CC and BCC
- Subject line
- Greeting
- Email body, and sequence in which the information is structured

## Writing effective subject lines

The email subject line is an important deciding factor of whether your email will be opened or ignored. It is that one attention grabbing element that would drive the purpose of the email home. Here are a few things, you need to remember when writing an effective email subject line:

1. Never leave it blank.  
Reason: It appears careless and leaves the recipient with no idea on what the email maybe about.
2. It should be short and clear.
3. It should summarize the most important part/purpose of the email.

For example:

1. If you are emailing your manager to request for a holiday, then your subject could be: "Holiday request from 10-14 August".
2. If you are applying for a job it can be: "Job Application: Senior Executive"
3. Precise information like project titles, meeting locations or your email purpose expressed in the most precise way possible.

## CC and BCC

- CC stands for carbon copy.
- BCC stands for blind carbon copy.
- If you want to send an email to multiple recipients, you can use CC or BCC. In both cases you are sending "carbon copies" of the email to different people. However, all the email addresses under the CC option will be visible to all of the email's recipients.
- Email addresses under BCC will not be visible to other recipients. This is ideal when you do not want your emails recipients to see each other's email addresses or know who else has been included in the email. This could be the case when sending mass greetings during public holidays to customers, common update email to clients or partners, etc.

## Greeting/salutation

This is the very sensitive because how you address the recipient leaves a lasting impression and may impact their attitude towards you. It largely depends on the rapport you have with the person you are writing the email to as well as and the communication culture of their organization.

It is important to note that, **greeting a recipient in the beginning of a conversation or professional relationship should take a more formal approach**, and as your relationship develops you can transition to less formal options. Keep in mind:

- It is common practice in the context of Bangladesh to use terms like “Bhai”, “Apu”, “Apa”, etc. following someone’s first name in a greeting. A rule of thumb is that these terms can be used if that is the way you would address the recipient in person.
- If unsure how to greet the recipient, or if in the initial stages of a professional relationship, more formal options such as “Mr.” or “Ms.” are appropriate.
- If the recipient is significantly senior to you, or you are writing to a customer or client, “Sir” or “Madam” are appropriate options. Again, if you would greet someone in person by saying “Sir” or “Madam”, that is also how you should greet them in an email.

Keep in mind that the way you greet someone in writing **may differ depending on context and organizational culture. When unsure, always take the more formal option.**

Here are a few examples:

Type of Greeting	Tone/Context	Where it is Appropriate
Hi Tahmid	Hi plus using the first name is informal and you can use this if you share an informal or friendly understanding with the person	- If the recipient is your junior or works under your supervision
Hi Tahmid Bhai	Hi plus using the first name with “Bhai”/ “Apu”/ Apa is informal with a friendly tone  Not suitable for organizations with formal communications cultures	- If your relationship with recipient is not formal - If the recipient is your peer (not senior) and using “Hi” or “Hello” in email is common practice in the organization
Dear Tahmid	Polite and friendly  Can be considered formal if addressing juniors	- If the recipient is your junior or works under your supervision  - If the recipient is your peer (not senior) and using first name only in written greeting is common practice in the organization

Dear Tahmid Bhai	<p>“Dear” plus using the first name with “Bhai”/ “Apu”/ “Apa” is formal with a polite and friendly tone</p> <p><b><u>This is common practice in many local organizations</u></b></p>	- Suitable for most formal contexts where you are not trying to establish the recipient as your senior
Dear Mr. Tahmid	<p>Using the title or the surname preceded by Mr/Ms/M is quite formal but can come across as cold.</p> <p>Remember, when unsure, always take the more formal option.</p>	- Appropriate when you don’t know the person.
Dear Sir/Madam	Using “Dear Sir/ Madam” is appropriate in cases when you don’t know who will be receiving the email (for example, when you are sending a job application)	<p>- When you don’t know the recipient’s gender, and recipient is or may be senior to you</p> <p>- Addressing a customer/client and you are unsure of their gender</p>
Dear Sir Dear Madam	Using “Dear” plus “Sir” or “Madam” is polite and formal.	<p>- Appropriate when you are trying to be strictly formal and polite. Used when the recipient is significantly senior to yourself in terms of professional or position, age.</p> <p>- Suitable for addressing customers/clients</p>
To whom it may concern	Appropriate in cases when you don’t know who you are sending it to (for example, when you are sending a job application)	<p>- Appropriate when you don’t know who you are sending your email to,</p> <p>- Resort to this when you do not have any other better alternative.</p>

**Notes:**

- Avoid using “Dear Concern” as a greeting or salutation. Although this is not uncommon practice in Bangladesh, it is not an appropriate term to use as an email greeting.
- When addressing a group, it is ideal to adjust the greeting to the context, such as “Dear team”, “Dear colleagues”, “Dear marketing team”, etc. However, if unsure, the greeting “Dear All” is in common use and can be a general option.

## Email Body

While writing an email, there are few things to keep in mind:

- Be brief and precise. Writing less will make your message more impactful
- Avoid extending your email beyond three paragraphs if possible
- Get to your main point as quickly and clearly as possible
- Use text formatting (bold, underline, etc) to highlight key points if needed
- Maintain a positive tone

With regard to attachments:

- Be thoughtful and avoid cluttering the recipient's inbox
- If sending large files, download links instead of attachments may be suitable
- If an attachment is important it is ideal to mention it within the email body

## Closing

There are many possible ways of closing an email. The following are a few suggestions according to context:

Closing Phrases	Tone
Sincerely Regards	Formal
Warm Regards Kind regards	Moderately formal

Following closing phrase, most professional email also include a signature section with the following elements:

- Name (full name)
- Designation
- Organization
- Further information like (such as office address, website, logo, etc)

If your organization does not have a standardized email signature, then name, designation and organization (or just name if that is all that is applicable) are ideal for the signature section.

### Common phrases used in emails, based on context

Purpose	Possible phrases
Introduce the subject or topic of the email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am writing in reference to...</li> <li>I am writing to inquire about...</li> </ul>
If it's a reply to a previous correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank you for your letter/email</li> <li>With regard to your email/message</li> <li>With reference to our conversation/meeting last week/ month...</li> <li>With regard to our discussion on...</li> </ul>
If it has taken you an unusually long time to reply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I apologize for the delay in replying (more formal)</li> <li>I am sorry it took me so long to get back to you</li> </ul>
While delivering good news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are pleased to inform you that</li> <li>I am delighted to tell you that</li> </ul> <p>(Do not use "you would be delighted to know" - it's not appropriate to assume the recipient's reaction)</p>
While delivering bad news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I regret to inform you that</li> <li>Unfortunately,</li> <li>I'm afraid</li> </ul>
To call attention to a particular point or piece of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please note that</li> <li>I'd like to call your attention to</li> <li>I'd like to emphasize that</li> </ul>
To ask the other person's opinion or advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think is the best way to proceed?</li> <li>I'd like to hear your thoughts</li> <li>Please do share your thoughts</li> </ul>
If you are adding more information to your email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information you requested is enclosed/attached</li> <li>Please find the enclosed/attached</li> </ul> <p>(you may insert the name of the file for specificity)</p>
To express that you need an answer quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'd (highly) appreciate it if you could reply at your earliest convenience</li> <li>This is an urgent matter</li> <li>Please let me know as soon as possible</li> </ul>
Refer to future/further correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I look forward to hearing from you</li> <li>Please do not hesitate to contact us again if you need further information</li> <li>Let me know if there is anything else, I can help you with</li> <li>Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions</li> </ul>

## Types of emails:

The structure of and sequence within an email body will vary according to the type or purpose of the email. Below are some examples and general guidelines:

### Complaint Emails

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#### Structure:

The structure or format can vary in a complaint email, but a general template is as follows:

- Paragraph 1: Introduce the purpose of the email followed by the specific details of the order/activity
- Paragraph 2: Go into detail about the problem you have faced
- Paragraph 3: Put in something positive about who you are writing it to, and state what you would like them to do very clearly

#### Example:

*Subject: Product defect and replacement (order number 98680075)*

Dear Tahmid Bhai,

I am writing in reference to my order (order number 98680075) for 50 light bulbs and 500 meters of copper wire placed on 13 January 2020.

After unpacking and trying to use the ordered items I was very disappointed to find that that 20 of the light bulbs were broken and the copper wire was not properly insulated at several points. When we called your helpline, the customer service representative, whose name I cannot seem to recall, denied the possibility of such an error and was very rude.

Dhaka Electronics is well known for the quality of its products, prompt delivery after sales service and has lived up to its reputation until now. This is why we intend to regularly purchase supplies from the company. We are sure this is an anomaly. However, since the products are in no condition to be used, we would like the company to replace them as soon as possible. We are eagerly looking forward to your reply in order to resolve this issue.

Regards,

Name

Designation

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## Responding to a complaint email

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### Structure:

- Paragraph 1: Apologize for the problem/inconvenience caused
- Paragraph 2: Provide one (or multiple) definitive solutions with timeline for the proposed solutions
- Paragraph 3: Close with gratitude for feedback and promise of improvement

### Example:

Dear Mr. Hossain,

We would like to sincerely apologize for the delivery of defective products against your last order (order number 98680075) placed on 13 January 2020. The people responsible for this serious error have been notified and due action is being taken.

Our team is working on a replacement shipment which will reach your specific address by 17 January 2020. Our customer service representative will contact you to ensure that the replacement has reached you within the given time.

On behalf of our company, I would like to thank you for staying with us and letting us improve our services. Your feedback is crucial to our growth. Please reach out to us for any further assistance. We are always here to serve you to our best abilities.

Warm Regards.

Name

Designation

## Rejection emails

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### Structure:

The general idea while delivering any form of negative news or feedback is to reduce might negative emotions. The sandwich approach is a good way to do this, by using three paragraph as follows:

- Paragraph 1: It is ideal to not go into the negative news right away. The first paragraph can start the email by mentioning something positive or reaffirming faith in the recipient or company.
- Paragraph 2: The negative news/message can be mentioned here. It is ideal to use softening/indirect language to minimize negative impact on the recipient.
- Paragraph 3: Wrap the email up on a positive note.

### Example 1:

Dear Mr. Tahmid,

Thank you for your interest in working with us. We were very pleased to receive your proposal to be one of our regular vendors. Dhaka Electronics has built a strong reputation as one of the highest suppliers in the country for electronic goods.

However, I am afraid that the proposal you have shared does not suit our specific needs. As we are a small organization we are need to proceed with the most efficient option.

On behalf of our company, I would like to express immense gratitude for you interest in us. We hope that we will have scope to work together in the future.

### Example 2:

Dear Mr. Zahir,

We are very pleased to receive your application for the position of Senior Customer Service Executive. We have gone through your application and we feel you have great experience with customer management.

However, we regret to inform you that due to lack of available positions, your application could not be shortlisted for an interview. Thank you for your patience through all the previous phases of our selection process

We appreciate your qualifications and experience and will notify you if there are suitable vacancies in the future. Please do stay in touch with us.

Sincerely



## Setting meetings and meeting minutes

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### Guidelines - setting meetings:

- Stick to finishing within one paragraph. Be precise and to the point.
- Include the following information:
  - Agenda
  - Date
  - Time
  - Place
  - Participants
- You can use bullet points or write in paragraph form with date/time highlighted.
- As a closing you can ask to be notified if the people invited would not be able to attend.
- If participants need to go over any documents before attending, include the documents in the email and clearly mention this in the email body.
- Keep the tone of the email formal.

Note: **meeting minutes** are summaries of meetings that would contain the above basic detail (agenda, date, participants) as well as a summary of *key discussion points* (and sometimes, *next action points*).

### Example:

*Subject: Meeting: final phase of new office space development (12-jan)*

Dear All,

I am writing to request you to attend a meeting to discuss the final phase of our new office space development. Please see details below:

Date: 12 January, 2020

Time: 5pm

Venue: Conference room

Participants: Mr, Mahin Rahman, Ms. Shumona Khanam

If you are unable to attend the meeting, please leave us an email to let me know prior to the meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely

## Job Application

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### Guidelines:

The aim is to make sure your email is read and your application is evaluated.

- Mention that resume and cover letter are attached.
- Refer to any previous correspondence or job post.
- Be brief and precise.
- Avoid writing extensively about your qualifications. You may highlight in one or two sentences what you might want them to know about you but avoid going further than that.
- End with urging or inviting further correspondence. Thank the recipient for their time.
- Maintain a formal tone.

### Example:

Subject: Application - Sales Executive

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to apply for the position of **Sales Executive** at Dhaka Gadgets, in response to the vacancy announcement on the company website. Please find attached my resume and cover letter.

I have gone through the job description in detail and feel that I am very good fit for the position. I have a good track record of sales experience even before completing my graduation, and know the mobile phone sector very well. I hope I will get the opportunity to speak to you further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards