

Emails & letters

Plan


1. Think before you write
 - Recipients: Who are they?
What do they already know about the topic?
Will they understand technical terms or do you need to explain them?
 - Objective: Why are you writing?
What do you want to achieve? What action or response do you want?
2. Create an outline
 - Make a list of the key points you want to cover
 - Decide on the best order for the readers


Write - in clear, readable English

3. Use everyday professional English (not over-informal and not too informal)
4. Put the key messages near the start (in paragraph 2 if possible)
5. Avoid or explain jargon and technical/ unfamiliar terms
 - Don't assume recipients will understand terms you're familiar with
6. Keep it short - don't pad it or repeat yourself
 - Sentences: maximum 20 words
 - Paragraphs: maximum 6 lines in a letter / 4 lines in an email
7. Start a new paragraph for each new topic / only put one main point per sentence
8. Use bullet point or numbered lists, where appropriate (e.g. for documents needed)

Review

9. Are you satisfied your letter / email will achieve its objective?
 - Are all points in a logical order? Have you avoided jargon, if appropriate?
Have you used plain English?
10. **FINAL CHECK**
 - Check the name, address and any enclosures or attachments
 - Check grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - Check the opening and sign-off are appropriate

 **TOP TIP**
If you are writing a response to an incoming letter, make sure you know the questions that need to be answered and issues that need to be covered.

 **TOP TIP**
Instead of 'I acknowledge receipt of your letter' write 'Thank you for your letter'.

 **TOP TIP**
Put yourself in the readers' shoes as you re-read it.

 **TOP TIP**
Print it out – it's easier to spot mistakes on paper!