

Formal and informal business communications activities

Match up the formal and informal cards (not the medium-formality ones) by function.

OR

Work in Student A and Student B pairs. Read out your mixed-up phrases, match them up without showing your worksheets to each other, and write down the phrase with the other level of formality from your partner's worksheet next to each one, writing the whole sentence each time (not just the number or letter). You don't need to do them in order, so you can start with the easy ones and leave any tricky ones to match until last. If the sentence is incomplete, you can say "dot dot dot" for the last part.

Hint for the pairwork activity: Student A has the informal emailing and formal telephoning phrases, and Student B has the formal emailing and informal telephoning phrases.

Check with a copy of the worksheet with the middle column missing, then brainstorm medium-formality/ standard level equivalents into the middle column. You can change or combine the formal or informal ones, or make up your own similar phrases.

Compare your medium-formality phrases with the ones on the complete cards worksheet. Many other phrases are OK, so check with your teacher if you wrote something different.

OR

Find mixed medium-formality cards for each box

OR

Do a jigsaw task with all three levels of formality cards, then use the middle ones to check your answers

Test each other on the phrases by:

- Reading out a card and seeing if your partner can identify if it is for telephone or emailing
- Reading out one card and seeing if your partner can identify if it is formal or informal
- Reading out a card and seeing if your partner can identify if it is for starting or ending
- Reading out one card and seeing if your partner can identify all three of the things above
- Reading out the formal and informal versions and seeing if your partner can make the medium-level one, giving key words to help if needed
- Reading out the formal and medium cards and seeing if your partner can make the equivalent informal phrase
- Reading out the informal and medium cards and seeing if your partner can make the equivalent formal phrase
- Reading out a formal or informal card and seeing if your partner can make the other version
- Explaining the function/ situation and level of formality and seeing if your partner can make a suitable phrase

Choose one card and roleplay a phone call or email exchange at the right level of formality including that phrase in what you say, discussing the situation before you start.

Flip a coin twice to decide what interaction to roleplay:

Heads = email, Tails = phone

Heads = formal, Tails = informal/ casual/ friendly

Useful phrases for doing the pairwork matching activity

- “Shall I read out my version first?” – “Can you read out one of yours?”
- “Yes, please go ahead.”/ “Yes, please.”
- “Sorry, can you say that again (more slowly/ a little more slowly)?”
- “Sorry, can you repeat the first part/ middle part/ last part/ last word/ first sentence/...?”
- “I think mine/ yours is an emailing phrase/ is a telephoning phrase/ is formal/ is informal/ is said by the caller/ is said by the receiver/ is a starting phrase/ is an ending phrase.”
- “I agree.”/ “I think so too.”
- “I think it matches.../ I guess it has the same function as...”
- “(Actually) I don’t think it matches... because... (Do you have any other ideas?)”
- “(Sorry) did you say... (or...)?”
- “(Sorry) how do you spell...?”
- “What does... mean?”/ “Do you know what... means?”
- “Do I need any punctuation/ a comma/ a full stop/...?”
- “Can I check that back?”/ “Can I read that back to check?”
- “(I’m not sure/ I really don’t know.) Shall we skip this one (and come back to it later)?”
- “Let’s go back to...”/ “Shall we try... again?”

Example pairwork matching activity dialogue

A: Shall I read out my version first?

B: Yes, please.

A:...

B: Sorry, can you say that again a little more slowly?

A:...

B: Okay, thanks. I think it matches...

A: Actually I don’t think it matches that because... (Do you have any other ideas?)

B: I’m not sure then. Shall we skip this one and come back to it later?

A: Okay. Good idea.

B: Can you read out one of yours?

A: ...

B: I guess it has the same function as...

A: I think so too. I think yours is formal and mine is informal.

B: I agree. Can you repeat the last part so I can write it down?

A: ...

B: Okay, got it now, thanks.

A: And did you say... or...?

B: ...

A: Okay, I think I’ve got it, but can I read it back to check?

B: Please go ahead.

A:...

B: Yes, that’s right.

A: Great. Let’s go back to...

Mixed formal and informal telephone and email phrases to match

Student A

1. Best wishes
2. Certainly. May I ask who is calling?
3. Good morning. ABC Inc. Sales. Alex Case speaking. How may I help you?
4. Good morning. Could I possibly speak to Ms Smith in the Sales Department?
5. Hi guys
6. Hope your hangover isn't too bad!!
7. I'm calling regarding...
8. If you need any more info, just let me know.
9. John
10. Just got your mail.
11. Looking forward to hearing from you.
12. No, I think that has covered everything for now, thank you.
13. Please hold the line and I'll put you straight through to the person in charge.
14. So, is there anything else I can help you with?
15. Thank you once again for phoning us about this. Have a good day.
16. This is John Smith calling from CDE Corp.
17. Wow! That was quick!
18. Writing about...
19. A

Student B

- A) A.M.Case (Mr)
- B) Dear Mr Smith
- C) Hello?
- D) Hi. Is Carole around?
- E) I am writing to you in connection with...
- F) I hope this email finds you well.
- G) I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- H) I'm ringing about...
- I) If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.
- J) It's John.
- K) Just a sec. I'll get her for you.
- L) No, that's it, I guess.
- M) Sincerely yours
- N) So, anything else you need to know?
- O) Sure. Who's that?
- P) Thank you very much for your email this morning.
- Q) Thank you very much for your prompt reply.
- R) Thanks. See you. Bye.
- S) To: All sales staff

Cards to cut up/ Suggested answers
Telephoning

| (Super-)formal/ polite | Medium/ Standard | (Super-)casual/ informal/ friendly |
|---|--|---|
| Good morning. ABC Inc. Sales. Alex Case speaking. How may I help you? | Good morning. ABC Inc. Sales. Alex speaking. How can I help you? | Hello? |
| Good morning. Could I possibly speak to Ms Smith in the Sales Department? | Hello. Can I speak to Carole Smith? Is Carole there/ available? | Hi. Is Carole around? |
| Certainly. May I ask who is calling? | Of course. Who's calling, please? Can I have your name? | Sure. Who's that? |
| This is John Smith calling from CDE Corp. | This is John. This is John Smith. | It's John. |
| I'm calling in connection with/ regarding... | I'm calling about... I'm phoning about... | I'm ringing about... It's about... |
| Please hold the line and I'll put you straight through to the person in charge. | Just a moment. I'll connect you./ Please hold. I'll put you through. | Just a sec. I'll get her for you. |
| So, is there anything else I can help you with? | So, can I help you with anything else? | So, anything else you need to know? |
| No, I think that has covered everything for now, thank you. | No, I think that has covered everything/ that's all, thanks. | No, that's it, I guess. |
| Thank you once again for phoning us about this. Have a good day. | Thank you for calling. Goodbye. | Thanks (for calling). See you. Bye. |

Emailing

| (Super-)formal/ polite | Medium/ Standard | (Super-)casual/ informal/ friendly |
|---|---|---|
| Dear Sir or Madam Dear Dr/ Mr/ Ms Smith | Dear John Hi John | John Hi |
| To: All sales staff | Dear all Hi everyone | Hi guys Hi |
| I hope this email finds you well. I hope you are well. | How are you? | How's it going? Hope your hangover isn't too bad!! |
| I am writing to you regarding/ in connection with/ in order to/ due to... | I'm writing about/ to/ because... | Writing about/ to/ because... |
| Thank you very much for your email this morning/ of 13 September. | Thank you for your email. Thanks for your email. | Just got your mail. Was lovely to hear from you! |
| Thank you very much for your prompt reply. | Thanks for your quick reply. | Wow! That was quick! |
| I look forward to hearing from you soon. | I'm looking forward to hearing from you. | Looking forward to hearing from you. Write soon! |
| If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. | If you need any more information, please (feel free to) contact me. | If you need any more info, just let me know/ just drop me a line. |
| Sincerely yours Sincerely Best regards | Regards Yours All the best | Best wishes BW XXX |
| A.M.Case (Mr) Alex Case (Mr) | Alex Case Alex | A (<i>nothing</i>) |

Blank medium formality cards versions

Telephoning

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Good morning. ABC Inc. Sales. Alex Case speaking. How may I help you? | | Hello? |
| Good morning. Could I possibly speak to Ms Smith in the Sales Department? | | Hi. Is Carole around? |
| Certainly. May I ask who is calling? | | Sure. Who's that? |
| This is John Smith calling from CDE Corp. | | It's John. |
| I'm calling in connection with/ regarding... | | I'm ringing about... It's about... |
| Please hold the line and I'll put you straight through to the person in charge. | | Just a sec. I'll get her for you. |
| So, is there anything else I can help you with? | | So, anything else you need to know? |
| No, I think that has covered everything for now, thank you. | | No, that's it, I guess. |
| Thank you once again for phoning us about this. Have a good day. | | Thanks (for calling). See you. Bye. |

Emailing

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Dear Sir or Madam Dear Dr/ Mr/ Ms Smith | | John Hi |
| To: All sales staff | | Hi guys Hi |
| I hope this email finds you well. I hope you are well. | | How's it going? Hope your hangover isn't too bad!! |
| I am writing to you regarding/ in connection with/ in order to/ due to... | | Writing about/ to/ because... |
| Thank you very much for your email this morning/ of 13 September. | | Just got your mail. Was lovely to hear from you! |
| Thank you very much for your prompt reply. | | Wow! That was quick! |
| I look forward to hearing from you soon. | | Looking forward to hearing from you. Write soon! |
| If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. | | If you need any more info, just let me know/ just drop me a line. |
| Sincerely yours Sincerely Best regards | | Best wishes BW XXX |
| A.M.Case (Mr) Alex Case (Mr) | | A (<i>nothing</i>) |

Key words for the medium-formality phrases

Use the words below to help with the brainstorming task above. Some words can be used more than once. Most of the other words to make the phrases can be taken from the formal and informal versions above, and so are not given in this list.

- all
- are
- available
- calling
- can
- connect
- course
- everyone
- feel free
- goodbye
- have
- hello
- 'm
- moment
- name
- of
- phoning
- thanks
- the
- there
- this
- with
- you