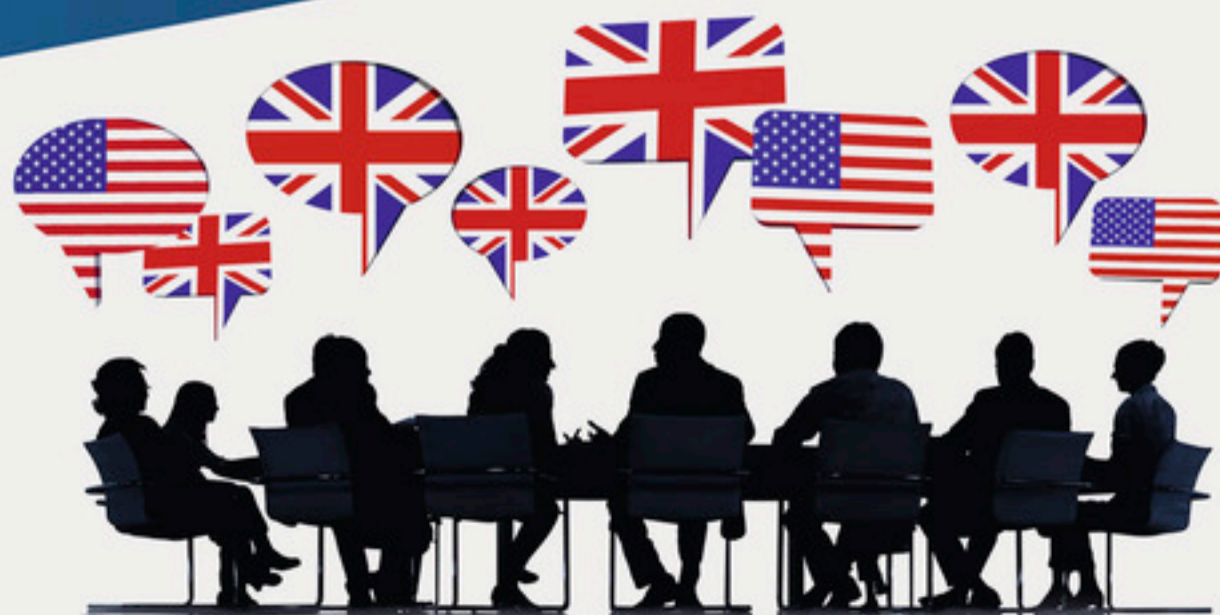


Förster / Lewis / Pattinson / Schroevers / Shellabear / Thomas

# Business English

Alle wichtigen Vokabeln und Redewendungen für den Job



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Business English





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### **Business English**

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# Teil 1: E-mails in English

Autor: Sander Schroevers

Zweifellos sind E-Mails nach wie vor das wichtigste Kommunikationsmittel im Berufsleben. Durch sie bleiben wir in Kontakt mit unseren Unternehmen und bekommen die Möglichkeit, über unterschiedliche Zeitzonen hinweg zu kommunizieren. Dieses Kapitel »E-mails in English« soll Ihnen dabei helfen, das Kommunikationsmedium auch in der Fremdsprache gerne zu nutzen. Wenn Sie das umsetzen, was Sie hier lesen, können Sie die elektronische Kommunikation produktiver in Ihren internationalen Geschäftskontakten einsetzen.

Dieses Kapitel deckt alle wichtigen Bereiche des Geschäftslebens ab und ist in thematische Einheiten gegliedert, um Ihnen einen schnellen Zugriff zu ermöglichen. Sie bekommen einerseits das nötige Handwerkszeug, um geschäftliche E-Mails effektiv verfassen zu können, und bauen andererseits systematisch Sprachsicherheit und somit Selbstvertrauen auf.



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# 1 An E-mail's Anatomy

This paragraph focuses on the specific elements of English business e-mails, that we don't always pay attention to, but can make all the difference.

## 1.1 Subject Lines That Work

The subject line is one of the two most critical parts of an e-mail message. Most people (approximately 80%) make decisions on reading and responding based on the subject line and the identity of the sender, not on a first-in – first-out basis. Nevertheless a subject line seems to be one of the most neglected lines in e-mails.

### How to make subject lines in English

The first step is to consider what your reader needs or wants to know from the subject line:

- Ideally, it is a summary of your message.
- Just like in journalism or direct mail: the more active and informative phrases are, the quicker they result in action. That's why mentioning essential information like who, what, when already in the subject line is advisable. Try to keep it short and simple (<k-i-s-s>) and avoid vague indications like *project* or *update* etc.
- Always try to write subject lines that stimulate the reader to open your message. Should you need anything specific from the addressee, then introduce this in the subject line.
- Subject lines are also handy for people who wish to archive messages. Therefore make sure that they aren't left blank and that the subject line relates to the subject of the message. Avoid lines like: *one more thing* or *second thoughts*, if you think that your message might be archived.

#### Examples

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good news Schaffhausen project
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action needed by 4 p.m.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	November 27 committee meeting
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Update
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Status report



### **RE: automatically inserted**

Another thing is that when choosing ›Reply‹ most e-mail programs automatically insert ›RE:‹ (short for *regarding* or *reply*).

The same happens after choosing ›Forward‹ when ›FW:‹ is inserted. The problem is – and certainly you know this from your e-mails in German – that when a message goes back and forth several times, it might lead to unnecessary automatically expanded subject lines. This can easily result in subject lines such as: »Fw: Re: Aw: Re: Aw: Feedback on seminar Julle«. You may therefore simply want to change subject lines sometimes. This also allows you to show the progression in an e-mail correspondence.



#### **Example**

I: Request for finance Hamburg project  
II: Feedback requested – financing Hamburg project  
III: Feedback provided – Hamburg project  
IV: Hamburg project – finance request approved

## **1.2 Common Salutations and Openings**

### **1.2.1 Salutations**

Salutations or greetings can be formal or informal, depending on the situation or the relationship. And of course e-mail doesn't always follow the rules of formal business correspondence.

#### **First name or last name?**

Do bear in mind however that many English-speaking people will be quicker on first-name terms, whereas for German-speaking people it is less common to use one's first name in an e-mail message. Therefore be careful not to appear too distant in a culture which moves to first names easily because in addressing people with a more formal address, you do. And this could indicate you don't consider being friendly to your correspondent. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that in the English language there is no difference between *Sie* and *Du*, as they both are translated with *you*.



#### **Important**

A clear indication that it's all right to move to the first-person familiar is when a person signs her or his e-mail with the first name only. You may also wish to take the first step yourself by writing something like: »Dear Helen (if I may)«.

### Formal or informal?

Which salutation to use may also depend on your company's e-mail policy. The table below gives an overview of the possible salutations:

Type	English	German
You do not know who you are writing to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dear Sir or Madam</li> <li>▪ Dear clients</li> <li>▪ Hi everyone</li> </ul>	Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,
You know the person but you've never written to or met this person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dear Mr Smith</li> <li>▪ Dear Mrs Wade</li> <li>▪ Dear Dr Young</li> </ul>	Sehr geehrter Herr Müller, Sehr geehrte Frau Reusch,
The person is a little bit closer	Dear Sophie Reusch	Liebe Frau Reusch,
The person is a close business contact or she/he has signed her or his e-mail with the first name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dear Sophie</li> <li>▪ Hello, Sophie *</li> <li>▪ Hi, Sophie *</li> <li>▪ Sophie</li> <li>▪ Hi,</li> <li>▪ Hello,</li> </ul>	Liebe Sophie,
Several person/ closer contact	Hi everyone	Hallo zusammen

\* Please note the extra comma!

### Important

*Ms or Mrs?* Ms is used more frequently in the meantime as this term does not disclose the marital status. Only if the addressee refers to herself as *Mrs*, do you assume this salutation. The English *Miss* is out of date just as is the German *Fräulein*. *Dear Sirs* or *Dear Gentlemen* also seems old fashioned nowadays.



### Professions or positions in salutations

Just like it is possible in German to mention a profession or position in the opening without using a person's name, this can also be done in English. In this case, the specific word must be written with a capital. For instance as in: Dear Colleague, Dear Webmaster, etc.

### Non-gendered salutations/several persons

When sending bulk e-mail invitations, try to use non-gendered salutations like *colleagues* or *friends*. *To whom it may concern* still seems to function in e-mails, though its use appears to be on the decline. Nowadays e-mail writers prefer to use salutations like: *Hi all*, *Hi there*, *Dear All*, *Dear Team*, *Dear Co-workers* and so on.

### Woman or man?

With certain languages you may not always be sure whether you are writing to a man or a woman. In cases where you aren't sure, it is acceptable to write the full name in the salutation. For example: *Dear Moriko Kira* (this is a Japanese name, where *Moriko* is the female first name, and *Kira* is the family name). In Asian cultures (e.g. Japan, Korea, Vietnam, but also in Hungary) the family name comes first. Thus: *Mrs. Kira Moriko*. Family names in Slavic languages often have masculine and feminine versions. The latter can be recognised by the female suffix, often ending with >a< or >e<.

### No salutations?

Is it necessary to always use a salutation or greeting? Not always, although it usually is. But in back-and-forth e-mail correspondence, for instance, salutations quickly seem to be disappearing. And perhaps there is no need to identify or reinforce the parameters over and over again. The same applies for a quick answer to a short question for people who know each other well. Also e-mails among colleagues that are part of an ongoing conversation do not require a salutation or greeting.

### Checklist: formal or informal salutations

- 
- 1 Is the addressee outside the organisation? Then you usually need a formal salutation.

---

  - 2 Is the addressee a colleague or a friend? Then you can use an informal salutation, or even begin with the person's first name.

---

  - 3 Have you had previous contact? Then choose between formal and informal, depending on that contact.

---

  - 4 Note how the sender addressed you. You probably want to return the same salutation.
- 


### Punctuation marks and abbreviations

Should there be a colon, a comma or no punctuation after the salutation? The right answer depends on the country you are e-mailing to.



#### Important

 no punctuation: Dear Mr Smith

 colon: Dear Mr Smith:

In other English speaking areas a comma is used: Dear Mr Smith,



When using abbreviations there is another important difference you should pay attention to:

### Important

Contractions in British English are generally written without a full stop, e.g. *Mr, Mrs* and *Ms* – American English usually uses a full stop however, called *period* in North America, e.g. *Mr., Mrs. and Ms.*



*Mrs/Mr*



*Mrs./Mr.*



### Vocabulary:

colon: Doppelpunkt

punctuation: Satzzeichen

contraction: Zusammenziehung

full stop/ period: Punkt

## 1.2.2 Opening sentences

Use one of the following phrases to refer to earlier contact or to give the reason why you are writing.

### Formal: referring to earlier contact

- I am writing with regard to your recent e-mail.
- Referring to your request for information, ...
- I'm writing with reference to order number KULIP-1.
- Further to your last e-mail, ...
- I am mailing this via the >Contact us< link on your web shop. I would like to ask you ...
- Your name was given to me by ...

### Informal: referring to an earlier contact

- Just a quick note to say I really appreciated ...
- I got your name from Dr Stampstaaf.
- Re your e-mail ... (*instead of formal: Further to your last e-mail ...*)

### Giving the reason for writing

- Our reason for contacting you is the following: ...
- *Informal: I'm writing about ...*
- As discussed this morning in our telephone conversation,
- It is our pleasure to inform you of ...

- As we agreed during ...
- As requested in your e-mail of ...
- I am writing in connection with ...
- We would like to inform you about ...
- We would like to draw your attention to the following: ...
- Thank you for your e-mail and your interest in ...
- Thank you for the enquiry you made via our website.



#### Important

Note that in English the first phrase after the salutation always starts with a capital letter, whereas in German it starts with a small letter.

### 1.2.3 Small talk

Although the German translation for small talk is *Gepplauder*, this social skill can have an important function in Anglophone cultures because small talk is not only the ability to conduct a conversation, but also a method of showing some friendliness. This naturally influences the way e-mails are written. People in North America tend to add a bit more of a personal or emotional note in their correspondence than people in German-speaking areas, although the actual choice of words depends of course on the social and professional hierarchy.



#### Example

Dear Thomas

I hope you had a pleasant trip and that your accommodation is fine. Although the weather can be quite cold at this time of year, I'm sure you will like the old city. I'm writing to tell you how happy I am to hear the good news on the new business deal. My congratulations on the contract. I'm sure that it's only the beginning of our work in the Baltic market. And how are Aynur and the kids? Please give them my warmest regards.

- I hope you had a great weekend?
- I'm writing to tell you how happy I am to hear your good news. My congratulations on your recent marriage.
- I hope you're well, and give my regards to your family.
- It would be so nice to have you over one day here in Munich.

## 1.3 Ending an E-mail

### 1.3.1 Closing remarks

In English e-mails it is common to include a closing remark to let readers know that they have reached the end of a message. A closing may also be used to express your gratitude, or what you expect the reader to do (e.g. answer, provide information, etc.).

#### Standard closing remarks

- I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- We look forward to welcoming you to Düsseldorf.
- I look forward to receiving your advice on this matter.
- We should be glad to receive this information.
- We hope we have been of help to you.
- We trust to have furnished you with all the necessary information.

#### Timed closing remarks

In certain situations your choice of words might be influenced by the pressure of time. The phrases below show an increasing amount of pressure:

- We hope for an early reply
- I look forward to receiving this information as soon as possible.
- I would appreciate a reply asap.
- Please deal with this matter urgently. Can I expect a reply from you by tomorrow morning, please?

#### Vocabulary:

increasing: wachsend

asap: schnellstens (as soon as possible)

#### Offering further information or service

- Should you need any further information about ... we will be happy to assist you.
- If you'd like any more details, just let us know.
- Should you have any further questions, we stand readily at your disposal.
- If we can be of service in any way?

#### Thanks

- Finally, we wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation we received from your company's employees during the audit.
- Thank you again for your interest in our company.
- Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

**Announcing activities**




- I hope I may contact you later on this matter.
- Mr/Mrs ... will contact you at an early date to explain the details.
- We'll inform you on a weekly basis about ...
- We will forward the report as soon as possible.
- We'll be glad to provide you with further details.
- We shall inform you as soon as we have the requested products in stock again.

**Informal**

- I'm looking forward to ... (+ ~ing).
- Please feel free to contact me.
- If you'd like more details, let me know.
- Just give me a call if you have any questions.
- Have a nice weekend.
- Speak to you soon.

**1.3.2 Correct closing expressions**



The closing or ending of an e-mail should correspond to the salutation. Informal salutation means informal closing; formal salutation means formal closing; no salutation means no closing.

Type	Salutations	Closings
You do not know who you are writing to:	Dear Sir or Madam Dear clients	Yours faithfully
You know the person but you've never written to or met the person:	Dear Mr Smith Dear Mrs Wade Dear Dr Young	 Yours sincerely  Sincerely (yours)  Cordially yours
The person is a little bit closer:	Dear Sophie Reusch	Best regards With best regards
The person is a close business contact or she/he has signed her or his e-mail with the first name:	Dear Sophie Hello, Sophie Hi, Sophie Sophie Hi, Hello,	Best regards With best regards If the person is also a good personal friend: Kind regards Best wishes

## Punctuation

As mentioned earlier there is a punctuation difference between British English and American English. But besides this, the order of the two words is also reversed:

### Important

 no punctuation: Yours sincerely  
 comma: Sincerely yours,



## 1.4 Signatures and Disclaimers

### 1.4.1 Signatures

Make sure that your signature follows the international standards. Mention telephone and fax numbers with the appropriate country codes. Also note that the way of using spaces in numbers may differ from country to country. Sometimes city names must be translated to English. Foreign addresses can be difficult for someone who doesn't speak the language, or has a different database structure. Therefore it is best to write street names out in full without abbreviations. For the same reason it is advisable to translate the word *Postfach* to P.O. Box (an abbreviation of Post Office Box). Signatures often include a one-line description of the service the company provides. It is a subtle form of marketing.

### Example

Thorsten Wächter  
Muster GmbH  
Musterstrasse 10 (or P.O. Box 123)  
10100 Berlin  
Germany  
tel. +49-(0)30-123 4567  
fax +49-(0)30-123 4589  
e-mail [thorsten.waechter@muster-gmbh.de](mailto:thorsten.waechter@muster-gmbh.de)  
[www.muster-gmbh.de](http://www.muster-gmbh.de)

Leadership Symposium 20XX – To be held at the Muster College of Art and Design, Muster University, London.



### Create an English version

Most e-mail programs allow you to make several signatures, usually by going to >Preferences< and then into >Signature<. This way you can make a specific English version besides your German one. You can set the preferences of the program so that the signature you use most is the standard version.

### 1.4.2 Disclaimers

A disclaimer is a statement intended to specify or delimit the rights and obligations in connection with a dispatched e-mail. Although the legal status of e-mail disclaimers is relative in some countries, you may want to use one or more of the sample texts below.



#### Examples

This message and any attachments are intended for the named addressee(s) only and may contain information that is privileged and/or confidential. If you receive this message in error, please delete it and immediately notify the sender. Any copying, dissemination or disclosure, either whole or partial, by a person who is not the named addressee is prohibited. Virus scanning software is used, but any liability for viruses or other devices which remain in this message or any attachments is disclaimed.

This e-mail may contain confidential and/or privileged information. Any unauthorised copying, disclosure or distribution of the material in this e-mail or of parts hereof is strictly forbidden.

For legal and security reasons the information provided in this e-mail is not legally binding. Upon request ABC GmbH would be pleased to provide you with a legally binding confirmation in written form.

Nothing in this e-mail message amounts to a contractual or any other legal commitment on the part of ABC GmbH unless confirmed by a communication signed on behalf of ABC GmbH.

Because it can be annoying to see a long signature block repeated with back-and-forth messages, you may just want to use a hyperlink with a short phrase. This is especially helpful for people who want to print e-mail messages. To avoid the extra texts you may want to use a phrase like:

- Please visit our [e-mail disclaimer](#) for further details.
- For further information visit [www.abc.de/disclaimer](http://www.abc.de/disclaimer).

#### Vocabulary:

disclaimer: Ausschlussklausel

liability: Haftung, Verantwortlichkeit

disclosure: Offenbarung

commitment: Verpflichtung