



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B1·3A

Emails that actually get answered

Theme · Emails & communication



Unit 3 · B1·3A

Emails that actually get answered

Theme: Emails & communication

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Write a clear business email in 5 lines: subject, greeting, one clear ask, one deadline, close.
- Use 'will' for decisions made at the moment of speaking and 'going to' for plans decided before.
- Choose the right register (formal vs friendly) for internal, external and first-contact emails.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your worst email

Think of the **WORST** work email you received this month (unclear, too long, no ask). Describe it in 3 sentences. What was the problem?

Who sent it?

How long was it (roughly)?

What did they actually want you to do?

Lead-in · Match the subject line to the goal

Match each subject line to what the sender really wants.

1. "Quick question — 30 seconds"

2. "Action required by Friday 5 pm"

3. "Just checking in"

4. "For your approval — new pricing"

5. "FYI — no action needed"

followUp: Which of these subject lines would YOU open first? Which one would you leave for tomorrow?

Reading · The 5-line email

Most work emails fail for one reason: the reader has to read too much to find out what you actually want. A 5-line email fixes that. Line 1: greeting. Line 2: context — one sentence. Line 3: the ask — what do you want? Line 4: the deadline — by when? Line 5: close.

Example. Subject: 'Q3 report — draft for your review'. Hi Marina. Attached is the draft of the Q3 report we spoke about on Monday. Could you review sections 2 and 3? I need your comments by Thursday 5 pm to hit the client deadline. Thanks, João.

Notice three things. First, the subject already says what and why. Second, the ask is one sentence — not 'let me know your thoughts', which is vague. Third, the deadline is a specific day and time, not 'as soon as possible' (which means nothing).

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1. Why do most work emails fail?
 - (A) They are too short
 - (B) The reader has to read too much to find the ask
 - (C) They use bad grammar
2. What should line 4 contain?
 - (A) The deadline
 - (B) A greeting
 - (C) The company logo
3. What is wrong with 'as soon as possible'?
 - (A) It's rude
 - (B) It means nothing specific
 - (C) It's too formal

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

the ask — the one thing you want the reader to do

the deadline — the last moment to do something

hit the deadline — finish something before the deadline

vague — not clear or specific

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The 5-line email starts with the ask.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. 'Let me know your thoughts' is a good, clear ask.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. The example email has a specific day AND time for the deadline.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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4. 5-line emails are only for informal messages.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. 'ASAP' means nothing specific, according to the text.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Do YOUR emails follow the 5-line structure? Where do they usually get too long?

2. What's the WORST deadline phrase you receive at work?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the one clear thing you want the reader to do

2. the last moment to do something

3. to finish something before the deadline

4. not clear or specific

Vocabulary · Emails and phone communication

attach — add a file to an email

forward — send an email you received to someone else

cc / bcc — put someone else on the email in copy / hidden copy

reply — answer an email

follow up — write again about the same topic

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get back to (someone) — answer someone when you have the info

subject line — the short title of the email

greeting — the opening (Hi / Dear / Hello)

sign-off — the closing (Best regards / Thanks / Cheers)

the ask — the one thing you want the reader to do

cut-off — the last point at which something can be done

read receipt — a notification that the reader opened your email

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the lists.

1. I've ____ the report to this email — please have a look.

2. Please ____ this to Marta, she needs to see it too.

3. I'll ____ ____ you by Thursday with the numbers.

4. The ____ ____ is 'Q3 report — draft for your review'.

5. The ____ is Friday 5 pm — please don't be late.

6. I'll ____ ____ next week if I haven't heard from you.

Collocations • email verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

send — an email / a message

attach — a document / a file

hit — the cut-off

cc — a colleague

confirm — a meeting / a booking

flag — an email as urgent

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

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1. subject line · greeting · sign-off · headquarters

- (A) subject line
- (B) greeting
- (C) sign-off
- (D) headquarters

2. forward · reply · attach · deliver

- (A) forward
- (B) reply
- (C) attach
- (D) deliver

3. urgent · ASAP · low priority · flagship

- (A) urgent
- (B) ASAP
- (C) low priority
- (D) flagship

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to reply → a ____

2. to attach → an ____

3. to confirm → a ____

4. to remind → a ____

5. to schedule → a ____

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Grammar · Future forms — will vs going to

- 'will' — decisions made AT the moment of speaking** — • [phone rings] — I'll get it. • OK, I'll send you the file tonight. • Don't worry — I'll take care of it. Often with: I think / I promise / probably / I'll.
- 'going to' — plans and intentions decided BEFORE now** — • I'm going to send the report tomorrow. (I already decided.) • We're going to open a new branch in March. • They're going to hire two more people this quarter.
- Predictions — both are common** — • I think it will rain tomorrow. (opinion, no evidence) • Look at those clouds — it's going to rain. (evidence right in front of you)
- Present continuous — fixed arrangements (with a time)** — • I'm meeting the client on Thursday at 3. (calendar-fixed, near future)

Exercise A — Choose will or going to

Complete each sentence with *WILL* or *GOING TO*.

- [phone rings] — Don't worry, I ____ answer it.

- We ____ launch the new website in October — the date is confirmed.

- OK, I ____ send you the file after lunch.

- Look at that queue! It ____ take ages.

- I'm sure she ____ love the new design.

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6. They ____ move office next spring — the contract is signed.

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with future forms.

1. I will to send the report tomorrow.

2. We going to open a new branch next year.

3. The meeting will at 3 pm.

4. [phone rings] I'm going to get it.

Exercise C — Ask about the future

Write ONE question in the correct future form.

1. You want to know their marketing plan for next year. →

2. The email just arrived — you offer to answer it. →

3. You want to confirm the meeting time (already scheduled Thursday 3 pm). →

4. You want a rain prediction based on the dark sky. →

Exercise D — Rewrite for the right form

Rewrite each sentence with the correct future form.

1. OK, I send you the file tonight.

2. We open a new branch next year — it's decided.

3. Don't worry, I do it later.

4. I meet the client on Thursday at 3. (calendar-fixed)

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5. That box is heavy — you drop it!

Exercise E — Short answers

Answer each question truthfully in ONE short sentence, using a future form.

1. What are you going to do this weekend?

2. What time will you finish work today?

3. Are you going to answer that email now?

4. What's your next big project?

Exercise F — Complete the email exchange

Complete each answer with the correct future form.

1. — Can you send me the deck? — Sure, I ____ (send) it right after this call.

2. — What's on your calendar for Thursday? — I ____ (meet) the new client at 10.

3. — What are the marketing plans for Q4? — We ____ (launch) two campaigns and we ____ (hire) one more designer.

Listening · A quick call between manager and team member

Two colleagues have a 90-second call about a report. Notice how they switch between decisions right now (will) and plans (going to).

pre

Do you prefer to fix things over email or over a quick call? Why?

What's the ideal length for a work call in your opinion?

gist

1. What is the report about?

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2. Who is going to write it?

3. What does Voice A promise to do right now?

detail

1. By when does Voice A need the draft?

2. What does Voice B ask for extra?

3. What will happen if the CRM data is messy?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Is this a normal exchange, or unusually tense?

2. Who is the more senior of the two?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"I'll send it right after this call." — 'will' — decision right now

"I'm going to write it this week." — 'going to' — plan made before

"I need it by Friday 5 pm." — specific deadline (day + time)

"Can you also send me...?" — polite extra request

"I'll call IT if it's messy." — 'will' — contingent decision

Voice A: Marta, quick one — the Q3 North sales report. Are you good to draft it?

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Voice B: Yes, I'm going to write it this week. When do you need the draft?

Voice A: By Friday 5 pm. Client meeting Monday morning.

Voice B: OK. Can you send me the raw CRM data? And also the comments from the last quarterly review?

Voice A: I'll send the CRM export right after this call. The comments — I'll dig them up and forward them by tonight.

Voice B: Perfect. If the CRM data is messy again, I'll flag it back to you.

Voice A: Fair. And if it's messy, I'll call IT and get it cleaned before end of day.

Voice B: Deal. Talk Friday.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases.

1. I'm ____ write it this week.

2. I ____ send the CRM export right after this call.

3. I need it ____ Friday 5 pm.

4. I ____ IT and get it cleaned before end of day.

Speaking · The 90-second call

Prepare a 90-second call to a colleague. Structure: 1) name the topic, 2) the ask, 3) the deadline, 4) confirm next step. Use ONE 'will' and ONE 'going to' at least.

Scene: You need a colleague's slide for tomorrow's deck

A: You: presenting tomorrow at 10 am.

B: You: the colleague who has the slide half-finished.

Scene: You want to move a meeting

A: You: need to move Thursday's meeting to Friday.

B: You: the client, quite busy.

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Scene: You need a decision from your boss on 2 options

A: You: have to choose between vendor A and vendor B by end of week.

B: You: the boss, on the way to the airport.

Discussion · email vs call

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

In your job, do people call too much, email too much, or Slack too much?

When is it BETTER to call than to email? Give a real example.

What is your golden rule for the SUBJECT LINE?

How many emails do you get per day? How many actually need an answer?

Role-play · The urgent email that needs a call

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 2–3 minutes.

Scene: The client just sent an angry email at 5 pm on Friday

A: You: their account manager. You want to call, not reply by email. Prepare an opening line and ONE thing you will fix by Monday.

B: You: the client. You are frustrated because a delivery was late by 3 days. You want a real answer, not a copy-paste apology.

Scene: You need to reschedule tomorrow's team meeting

A: You: the meeting organiser. Your boss just booked you into another meeting at the same time.

B: You: a team member who blocked 90 minutes tomorrow for this. You are annoyed but professional.

Mini-presentation · 60-second Q4 plan

Deliver a 60-second update to your team about YOUR Q4 plans. Use the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — The ONE big goal for the quarter (going to).

Beat 2 (15s) — 2 concrete actions already planned (going to).

Beat 3 (20s) — 1 decision I'm making right now, live (will).

Beat 4 (15s) — Invite ONE question you can answer.

sample: My big Q4 goal is to reduce our email response time to under 4 hours. Two things are already planned: we're going to move our shared inbox to a new tool in October, and we're going to run a 90-minute training with everyone before we go live. Live decision — I'll set up the training slot this afternoon, so you should see a calendar invite by end of day. Ask me about the tool choice, because that's where I'm still learning.

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Writing · A 5-line business email

Write a business email in **EXACTLY 5 lines** (subject + 5 lines). Include: a clear subject, greeting, one line of context, **ONE** ask, **ONE** specific deadline (day + time), a warm close. Max 80 words after the subject.

bonus: Bonus task — the same email, half the words. Take your 5-line email and cut it in half. Then send both versions to a partner and ask which one they'd answer faster.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

5-line email: subject → greeting → context (1 line) → the ask → deadline → close.

'will' for decisions made at the moment of speaking; 'going to' for plans decided before.

Deadlines with a specific day AND time. Never 'ASAP'.

Match the register to the reader: internal short, external polished, first contact warm.

Quiz

- [phone rings] The best response is:
 - I'm going to answer it.
 - I'll answer it.
 - I answer it.
- 'We ___ open a new branch in March — the contract is signed.'
 - will
 - are going to
 - open
- The BEST deadline is:
 - ASAP
 - by Friday
 - by Friday 5 pm
- 'The ask' means...
 - the greeting
 - the one thing you want the reader to do
 - the sign-off
- Which subject line is **CLEAREST**?
 - Question
 - Update
 - Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with *ONE* word or phrase from the box.

Word bank: attach · forward · deadline · subject line · follow up · get back to

1. I've ____ the invoice — please pay by end of month.

2. Could you ____ this email to Marta as well?

3. The ____ for the report is Friday 5 pm.

4. A clear ____ helps your email get opened first.

5. I'll ____ next week if I haven't heard from you.

6. I don't have the answer now — I'll ____ you tomorrow.

2. Will or going to?

Complete each sentence with *WILL* or *GOING TO*.

1. [phone rings] — Don't worry, I ____ answer it.

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2. We ____ launch the new website in October — the date is fixed.

3. OK, I ____ send you the file after lunch.

4. Look at those clouds! It ____ rain.

5. I'm sure she ____ love the new design.

6. They ____ move office next spring — the contract is signed.

3. Subject line diagnosis

Read each subject line and choose the best label.

1. 'Update'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

2. 'Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

3. 'ASAP'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Rude and unclear

4. 'FYI — no action needed'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

5. 'Question'

(A) Clear

(B) Vague

(C) Urgent

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake with future forms or email vocabulary.

1. I will to send the report tomorrow.

2. We going to open a new branch next year.

3. I attached please find the file.

4. Please answer to my email.

5. Listening — three voicemails

Three people leave voicemails. Notice who is clearest, and who wastes time.

1. Which voicemail has the **CLEAREST** ask?

2. Which voicemail has **NO** clear ask?

3. Which voicemail is **TOO LONG**?

Voice A: Hey, it's me. Give me a call back when you can. Thanks. Bye.

Voice B: Hi, this is Ana from Beira Roasters, calling about tomorrow's delivery. Please call me back before 5 pm on 91X XXX XXX. Thanks.

Voice C: Hi, so, remember last month when we discussed the pricing, and then you sent me the deck, and then we had that call with Marta, and... anyway, I need to talk to you about the new proposal, when you have a moment, thanks.

6. Writing — a 5-line email

Write a 5-line business email (max 80 words after the subject line). Include: clear subject, greeting, 1 line of context, *ONE* ask, *ONE* specific deadline (day + time), warm close.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the Lumen Language School case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

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1. In Diana's 5-line reply to Bank X, what is the ONE thing she must NOT do?

2. Which of Diana's 5 indirect questions on the call is MOST important? Why?

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the subject line to the goal

1. asks for a small favour without pressure
2. gives a clear deadline in the subject
3. a soft nudge — no new information
4. needs a yes/no decision from the reader
5. shares information, nothing to do

Reading · The 5-line email

1. (B) The reader has to read too much to find the ask
2. (A) The deadline
3. (B) It means nothing specific
1. (B) False
2. (B) False
3. (A) True
4. (C) Not Given
5. (A) True
1. Model: mine get long in line 2 (context) — I overexplain the background because I'm afraid the reader forgot. This week I'll try to keep line 2 to ONE sentence.
2. Model: 'as soon as possible' and 'end of day' with no time zone — I never know what to do.
1. the ask
2. the deadline
3. hit the deadline
4. vague

Vocabulary · Emails and phone communication

1. attached
2. forward
3. get back to
4. subject line
5. cut-off
6. follow up
1. (D) headquarters
2. (D) deliver
3. (D) flagship
1. reply
2. attachment
3. confirmation
4. reminder
5. schedule

Grammar · Future forms — will vs going to

1. will / 'll
2. are going to
3. will / 'll
4. is going to / 's going to
5. will
6. are going to
1. I will send the report tomorrow. / I'm going to send the report tomorrow.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. The meeting is at 3 pm. / The meeting will be at 3 pm.
4. I'll get it. (decision at this moment, not a plan)
1. What are you going to do for marketing next year?
2. I'll reply to it. / Shall I reply to it?
3. So we're meeting on Thursday at 3, right?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



4. It's going to rain, isn't it?
1. OK, I'll send you the file tonight.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. Don't worry, I'll do it later.
4. I'm meeting the client on Thursday at 3.
5. That box is heavy — you're going to drop it!
1. Model: I'm going to visit my parents in Coimbra on Saturday.
2. Model: I'll finish around 6 pm — I still have one call at 5.
3. Model: No — I'll answer it tomorrow morning with a clear head.
4. Model: I'm going to redesign our website in Q4.
1. I'll send it right after this call.
2. I'm meeting the new client at 10.
3. We're going to launch two campaigns and we're going to hire one more designer.

Listening · A quick call between manager and team member

1. The Q3 sales numbers for the North region.
2. Voice B (Marta) — she already agreed to write it this week.
3. Send Marta the raw data from the CRM immediately after the call.
1. By Friday 5 pm — because the client meeting is Monday morning.
2. The comments from the last quarterly review, to add context.
3. Voice A will call IT and get it cleaned up before end of day.
1. Normal — friendly, short, both use first names, no defensive language.
2. Voice A — sets the deadline, has access to CRM admin, promises to call IT.
1. going to
2. will / 'll
3. by
4. will call / 'll call

Quiz

1. (B) I'll answer it.
2. (B) are going to
3. (C) by Friday 5 pm
4. (B) the one thing you want the reader to do
5. (C) Action required by Friday 5 pm — Q3 report

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. attached
2. forward
3. deadline
4. subject line
5. follow up
6. get back to

2. Will or going to?

1. will / 'll
2. are going to
3. will / 'll
4. is going to / 's going to
5. will
6. are going to

3. Subject line diagnosis

1. (B) Vague
2. (A) Clear
3. (C) Rude and unclear
4. (A) Clear
5. (B) Vague

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. I will send the report tomorrow.
2. We're going to open a new branch next year.
3. Please find the attached file. / I've attached the file.
4. Please answer / reply to my email.

5. Listening — three voicemails

1. Voice 2 — 'this is Ana from Beira Roasters, calling about tomorrow's delivery — please call me back before 5 pm on 91X XXX XXX'.
2. Voice 1 — 'hey, it's me... call me back when you can' — no reason, no deadline.
3. Voice 3 — 90 seconds of background before mentioning the request.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: promise a price and a start date in the reply itself. She needs the discovery call first — the reply should only buy time and set the next step.
2. Model: 'Could you tell me who makes the final decision on this?' — if it's not Ricardo, the whole 20-minute call risks being with the wrong person.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class