

Polite Follow-up Emails

Activity Type

Reading and Writing Exercises: identifying, matching, rewriting sentences, email writing, peer feedback

Focus

Follow-up emails about deliveries

Aim

To practice making polite enquiries about orders, describing delivery problems politely, and writing a follow-up email in a neutral or formal tone.

Preparation

Make one copy of the three-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

40 minutes

Introduction

In this follow-up emails worksheet, students practice useful language for checking on an order and following up on delivery problems, and then write their own polite follow-up email.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the three-page worksheet.

First, students read two follow-up emails about a late order and compare them.

Students then read the two emails again, look at a table and decide whether each sentence describes Email 1 or Email 2, putting a tick in the appropriate column or in both columns.

Exercise B - Answer key

1. Email 1
2. Email 2
3. Email 1 and Email 2
4. Email 2

Next, students write sentences about which email they would send and why.

Exercise C - Answer key

Email 2 is the most appropriate email as it is more polite and professional, uses a formal greeting and closing, and explains the problem and request clearly.

After that, students match six common order problems to suitable polite follow-up messages.

Exercise D - Answer key

1. d 2. b 3. a 4. c 5. e 6. f

Students then rewrite short, direct sentences to make them more polite using phrases from a box.

Exercise E – Possible answers

1. I am writing to ask about our order, which has not arrived yet.
2. I would be grateful if you could send us new products.
3. Could you please let me know the new delivery date for this order?
4. Please let me know your answer today.

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Procedure continued

Following that, students use a situation and prompts to write a follow-up email to a supplier.

Exercise F - Possible answer

Subject: Order 5887 - Late delivery

Dear Customer Service,

I hope you are well. I am writing to check on the status of order 9856. The products should have arrived yesterday, but they have not arrived yet.

Could you please let me know when we can expect the delivery? We need the products this week, so the delivery date is very important for us.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Best regards,

(Student's name)

Next, students exchange emails with a partner, read their partner's email and then tick the boxes for the criteria that their email meets.

Finally, students give their partner two positive comments about their email and one suggestion for improvement. Then, students edit their own email, making any changes as needed.

A. Read the two follow-up emails about a late order and compare them.
Email 1

Subject: Order 9856
<p>Hi,</p> <p>Where is our order 9856? It was supposed to arrive yesterday but it didn't. This is a problem for us. Tell me when it will come.</p> <p>Thanks,</p> <p>Anna</p>

Email 2

Subject: Order 9856
<p>Dear Customer Service,</p> <p>I hope you are well. I am writing to check on the status of order 9856. The goods were due to arrive yesterday, but they have not arrived yet.</p> <p>Could you please let me know when we can expect the delivery?</p> <p>Thank you in advance for your help.</p> <p>Best regards,</p> <p>Anna Novak</p>

B. Read the two emails again. Then look at the table and decide whether each sentence describes Email 1 or Email 2, putting a tick in the appropriate column. You can tick one or both emails for each sentence.

Sentences	Email 1	Email 2
1. Uses informal words and sounds a bit too direct.		
2. Uses a formal greeting and closing.		
3. Explains clearly which order it is and when it should arrive.		
4. Uses polite request phrases.		

C. Which email would you choose to send and why? Write two reasons.

.....

.....

D. Match the order common problems to the polite follow-up messages.

Order problems

1. Many boxes are wet and damaged.
2. You ordered 100 notebooks, but only 80 arrived.
3. Some of the glasses are broken.
4. The delivery date was 5 July, but today is 8 July and the order is still not there.
5. You ordered 200 pens, but you received 220.
6. The products should have arrived yesterday, but they haven't.



Polite follow-up messages

- a. Some of the glasses were broken when they arrived. Could you please send us new glasses?
- b. We ordered 100 notebooks, but we only received 80. Could you please send the missing 20 notebooks?
- c. The delivery date was 5 July, but the order has not arrived yet. Could you please check this?
- d. Many boxes were wet and damaged when they arrived. Could you please send us new boxes?
- e. Could you please tell us what we should do with the extra 20 pens we received with our order?
- f. Could you please tell me when the delivery will arrive? It should have arrived yesterday.

E. Use the phrases in the box to rewrite the sentences so that they are more polite.

Could you please...?	I am writing to...
I would be grateful if you could...	Please let me know...

1. Where is our order? It is late.
.....
2. Send us new products.
.....
3. Tell me the new delivery date.
.....
4. Answer me today.
.....

F. Your order 5887 should have arrived yesterday, but it hasn't. Write a follow-up email to the supplier. Use ideas and language from previous exercises to help you.

Subject:
Greeting:
Reason for writing:
Problem (what is wrong with the order):
Request (what you want them to do):
Closing:
Sign-off:

G. Exchange emails with a partner, read your partner's email and then tick the boxes for the criteria that their email meets.

1. A clear subject line with the order number	
2. A polite greeting and closing	
3. A clear explanation of the problem (what is wrong and when)	
4. A polite request (for example, 'Could you please...?')	

H. Now, give your partner two positive comments about their email and one suggestion for improvement, e.g. make it clearer, more polite, etc. Then, edit your own email, making any changes as needed.