We send informal e-mails and letters to people we know well (e.g. friends, relatives, etc.) about our recent news, personal problems, information we need, etc. We write these emails/letters in an informal style.

Structure of informal e-mails and letters:

An informal e-mail or letter consists of:

1. An informal **greeting**:

We begin letters with **Dear + name** and we use a comma at the end, not a colon (:).

We can begin e-mails not only with **Dear + name**, but also with **Hi/Hello + name.**

2. 1ˢᵗ paragraph: an introduction in which you ask about the person's health, thank for their previous email/letter, etc. and mention your reason/s for writing. (Read below for useful language).

3. 2ⁿᵈ / 3ʳᵈ (etc) paragraphs: a main body in which you write the main subject(s) of the e-mail/letter in detail, starting a new paragraph for each topic. Example topics could be: giving news, talking about plans, describing your new boy/girl-friend, describing the place where you are living now, making suggestions about what to do in your city to a friend who is coming to see you, etc. (Read below for useful language).

4. Last paragraph: a conclusion in which you write your closing remarks. (Read below for useful language).

5. An informal **ending**:

For close friends and relatives:

All my love/ Lots of love/ Love/Lots of kisses,

Your name

More neutral:

Best wishes/ Regards/ Kind regards/Bye for now/Take care,

Your name

FIRST PARAGRAPH – typical first sentences:

– **Questions/ Wishes about the person's health**:

How are you? I'm fine. I hope you're well.

– **A thank you to the person for their last e-mail/ letter**:

Thank you so much for your (lovely) letter/e-mail of … *November 30ᵗʰ*.

– **An apology for a delay in writing**:

Sorry for/about not writing earlier but … *I was very busy preparing for my exams.*

– **The reason why you are writing**:

I've got some good news! *I've got a new house*.

The reason why I'm writing is to … *invite you to come to Tenerife next Christmas*.

BODY PARAGRAPHS – typical body paragraphs sentences:

FOR MORE INFORMATION: SEE YOUR HANDOUT "SPEAKING".

– **Describe somebody:** use the present simple. **Talk about your routines…**: use the present simple, and adverbs and expressions of frequency: Every day I wake up at seven o'clock. Then I always have a coffee and toast for breakfast.

– **Talk about your likes and dislikes.** You can use these structures:

▫ I prefer sb/sth to sb/sth: I prefer fish to meat./ I prefer swimming to going running.

▫ I (dis)like/love/hate/prefer/enjoy/don't mind/recommend/suggest + noun/-ing: I like my timetable. I dislike making phone calls because it's boring.

▫ I would like/ would love/ would hate/ would prefer + noun/ to infinitive: I would prefer some flowers. / I would prefer to give her flowers because she is on a diet, so she probably doesn't want chocolates.

– **Talk about your expectations, wishes** (what you hope to happen). You can use:

▫ I want + to infinitive: I want to get a qualification.

▫ I would like + to infinitive: I'd like to get a job next year.

▫ I hope + to infinitive: I hope to travel to Madrid next Christmas.

– **Ask for advice/for an opinion:**

▫ Modal verb "would": Would you (+ inf)...?: What would you do? Would you go to a doctor's?

▫ Modal verbs "can, could":

Can you recommend (+ sth)...)?: Can you recommend a good hotel, not too expensive?

Could you tell me (+ sth)...)?: Could you tell me a bit about her?

What can we do?

– **Make a suggestion / Give advice.** You can use a lot of structures:

▫ Structures + infinitive:

I think we/you could ...: I think we could go to a restaurant first, and then to a disco.

We/You can...: You can get a train to Brighton from the airport.

Why don't you/we ...?: Why don't you come to my house on Saturday?

Let's + infinitive: Let's go to the cinema tonight.

▫ Structures + to infinitive:

Would you like to ...: Would you like to watch a film? What time would you like to meet?

I think the best thing could be to ... leave your job.

▫ Imperative: Go to a specialist so s/he can tell you what to eat.

– **Invite:**

I would like to invite you to ... *my birthday party on 26th July.*

Would you like (sth)...: Would you like a new watch?

Would you like to (verb)...: *Would you like to come to a dinner party on Friday 3rd November at 9 p.m.?*

– **Apologize:**

I'm (really) sorry **for** (sth/sb/ + verb-ing): *Sorry for arriving late at your party.*

– **Thank:**

Thank you for + sth/-ing : *Thank you for your invitation to stay with you in August.*

LAST PARAGRAPH – typical last sentences:

– **The reason why you must end the e-mail/letter**: (Well) that's all for now. / (Well) that's all my news.

– **Greetings to the person's family / friends**: Give my regards/ love to your family/ to Sarah. / My mother sends her love.

– **A request to the person to reply soon**:

(I) Look forward to hearing from you soon.

(I) Hope to hear from you soon.

Write soon and tell me all your news.

– **Wishes, thanks, invitations/suggestions...:**

Hope to *see you soon/ at Christmas*. / I hope that *my advice helps.*

Thanks again for ... *everything* / ... *for remembering my birthday* / ... *for the invitation.*

Don't forget my invitation *to Tenerife.*

– **Postscript:** PS I'm sending you ... *a photo of my family.*

In letters we write: PS I enclose ... *a photo of my baby*.

In e-mails we write: PS I attach ... *a photo of the three of us*.

• **Differences between informal e-mails and informal letters:**

In an informal letter you write your address (street; city or village; postcode) in the top right-hand corner, and you write the date under the address. The greeting always begins with *Dear* followed by the person's name and a comma.

In an informal e-mail you write your name and/or e-mail address in the first box, then the name of the person you are writing to in the second box and you can tell the reader what your text is about in the "subject" box. You obviously don't need to write the date. The greeting can begin with *Dear / Hi / Hello* with the person's name and a comma.