

Course: Professional English Toolkit

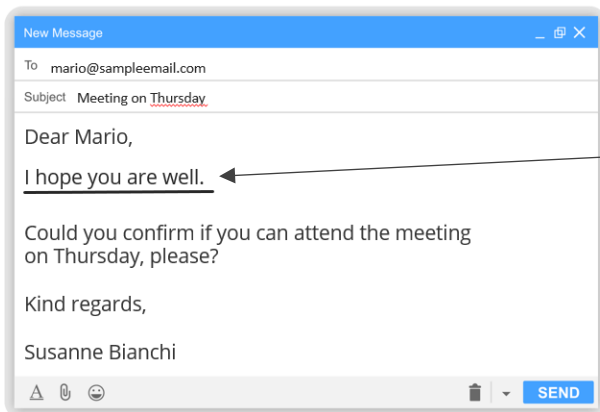
Section: Emails: The importance of the opening line



Emails: The importance of the opening line

Opening lines in emails and why we use them

- In English, an opening line 'softens' the email.
- Without it, you are 'straight to business' or you are perceived as being 'direct'.
- In most English-speaking cultures being direct is considered impolite.



It doesn't take a lot of time to add an opening line to the start of an email, yet it can be extremely valuable for maintaining a good relationship with the person you are communicating with.

Options for an opening line

Here are some simple options for an opening line to your email:

General opening lines

I hope you are well.

I hope this email finds you well.

I hope you are having a good day.

I hope you had a nice weekend.

I hope you are having a good start to the week.

Specific openings

Welcome back! I hope you had a nice holiday/break.

Sorry to hear you were unwell. I hope you are feeling better.

I hope the project is progressing well.

General opening lines

I hope you are well.

I hope this email finds you well.

I hope you are having a good day.

I hope you had a nice weekend.

I hope you are having a good start to the week.

Note that none of the sentences above are questions. You do not need to start a personal conversation.

But what if someone starts their e-mail asking you “How are you?”

To prevent the ‘conversation’ from continuing into another email, answer with:

I’m fine, thank you. I hope you are also well.

When you should and shouldn’t use opening lines

- It is usually a good idea to include opening lines in your emails in English.
- However, there are some exceptions. These are:
 - You are writing to a person who has a very direct email writing style
 - You have already written several emails to someone in the same day or week. In this case, there is no need to write an opening line each time.
 - You are writing to someone who is not a native speaker of English. Opening lines may or may not be important to them. Check to see if they use opening lines or not.

Summary:

- Writing an opening line does not convey important information but, culturally, it is very important for showing respect and building relationships.
- It is usually a good idea to include an opening line, but it is not always necessary.
- There are more opening line options than just: “I hope you are well”!

Action points:

- Practise using some of the examples of opening lines from this lesson.
- Notice if the people you communicate with via email use opening lines or not.
- Learn from the opening lines other people use when they write to you.