

DO'S AND DON'TS OF EMAIL WRITING IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT

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1 SUBJECT (BETREFF)

The subject line states the reason for this email and helps the recipient to determine the urgency and topic of this email. As your lecturers teach several courses it is advisable to state the course name and number of the course, as well as your reason for writing.

Include

- the course **title** and **number**
- the **subject** of your message

Example

280037 English Academic Writing III: Question
about presentation requirements

2 SALUTATION (ANREDE)

ADVICE

Rather risk sounding too formal, than being disrespectful by using an inappropriate salutation. You can always adjust the formality of the salutation in your next email, once your lecturer/recipient replied and signed their name. **Also:** Check for the correct spelling of the name !

DO'S

- Dear Professor Green

NOTE: Not all lecturers have honorific titles, if they do, make sure to use them (e.g: Dr.)

- Dear Mr. Green

- Dear Mrs/Ms. Green

NOTE: Mrs. is **not** the culturally appropriate translation for the German "Frau".

When in doubt always use Ms!!

- Hello Mr. Green

- Good Evening/ Morning Professor Green

DON'TS

- Hi (Professor Green)
- Hey (Professor Green)
- Addressing your lecturer by their first name
NOTE ! Unless you have been given **explicit permission** to do so. As a general rule, you may use the name your lecturer signs their emails with.

more formal

less formal

3 OPENER

ADVICE

Know your cultural context! In many countries (e.g. Britain, US, Australia), opening with small talk is considered very polite. In a German academic environment, it might be more appropriate to stick to the essentials.

First time emailing your lecturer

- Mention how the lecturer knows you or how you know them (especially if you have not met them personally)
e.g.: I am a student in your Academic Writing class.

Replying to an email

- Thank them for their answer
e.g.: Thank you for your email.

Optional small talk

- You can also start with polite small talk
e.g. : I hope you had a relaxing weekend,
e.g. : I hope you're enjoying the beautiful weather today

4 BODY

ADVICE

- Keep it short and to the point!
- Did you check if your question can be answered by looking at the syllabus or the Lernraum Plus?

START WITH

1. your reason for writing

e.g. I have a question concerning the requirements for the presentation on Tuesday

2. explain your problem/reason for writing as precise as possible

e.g. The syllabus states that the word count on the essay is 1200 words. As I need to elaborate on the history of the English language to explore the different aspects of my topic, I do not think I can stay within the word count.

END WITH

- What do you need from your lecturer?

Formulate a precise question:

e.g. Is it okay to write more than the required 1200 words?

5 Sign-off

ADVICE

Instead of using an informal, and potentially impolite Sign-off, it is advisable to use one of the many formal ways of signing off (see Do's). Do not include the automatic "Sent from my iPhone" Sign-off or other abbreviated forms. If you are not sure which one to use, you can copy the Sign-Off your lecturer uses in their reply.

DO'S

- Thank you
- Kind Regards
- All the best
- Sincerely
- Best

DON'TS

- Sent from my iPhone
- love
- thx

6 EXAMPLE

Subject: 280037 English Academic Writing III: Question about sources for the presentation

Dear Professor Green,

I am a student in your Academic Writing class (280037) and I have a question concerning the requirements for the presentation on Tuesday.

The syllabus states that we should include at least 5 different sources in our presentation. As my topic focuses on a very specific occurrence, there is only a limited number of academic sources to choose from. Is it okay if I only use 3 sources ?

Thank you for your help.

All the Best

Name

(add surname if you would like to be addressed by your surname)