

WRITING A formal e-mail

Name:

## A REQUEST

### Instruction

On your return from your holiday in England, you discover that **you have left something behind** at the B&B which is very valuable to you.

Write an e-mail to the proprietor to ask if they have found it and if they would be kind enough to send it on to you by post.

The **object** is **of your own choice**: it could be something **of real** or **sentimental value**, something **you need urgently** (e.g. for health reasons), something **funny** or **embarrassing**, but **not vulgar**, etc. Explain why it is important for you.

### Guidelines

#### 1. Register

- Be **brief** and **to the point** – use minimum **6** and maximum **10** lines.
- Be **polite**: use **'please'** wherever necessary; you may emphasise how much you enjoyed your stay, the kind reception by your hosts, the comfortable rooms, the lovely/spacious garden, the dinner (if you had any) etc.
- Since you have met each other, you sign off with less formal phrases. - **Do not be too familiar**, however.

#### 2. Strategies

- Write the **first draft** on your computer and use a **spellchecker**. (Avoidable errors will be doubly sanctioned).
- You do not need to add the date or the receiver's address.

Have another **look at the examples** of the reconstructed e-mails.

**KENNIS en strategieën vooraf in te studeren en oefenen thuis en in de klas.**

WRITING: A formal letter and/or email

a The structure

*sender's address*

Hill Cottage  
Shepherd's Lane  
Bordon  
Surrey GU35 85J  
Tel / Fax 01189 832089  
E-mail: hillcottage@hotmail.com

Blenheim Lodge  
28 Brantfell Road  
Bowness-on-Windermere  
Cumbria LA23 3AE

*receiver's address*

25th April 2008

*date*

Dear Mr and Mrs Burke

*salutation*

Would it be possible to book a double room with en-suite facilities for three nights from Friday August 24th until Sunday 26th?

We would also like to have dinner at your hotel on each night.  
I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

*complimentary close*

*signature*

Ms Theresa Whitaker

*sender's name (+ title)*

b Some rules

1 The address

- In an English address the house number is put before the street name.
- The postcode (or zipcode in American English) is put after the name of the town. In your own address use the Belgian system.
- Postcodes correspond to postal districts in a region, town or village. Within one city, village, etc. there are various postcodes, not one!
- In an e-mail the sender's address is usually put at the bottom.

2 The date

There are various systems:

15th May 2008

15 May 2008

May 15th 2008

May 15 2008

If you use the first and second system, remember to write:

1, 21, 31:     st                                 3, 23:             rd  
2, 22:         nd                                 all the rest:     th

- Do not write 'the' or 'of' in the date.
- There is a difference between the American and the British system. Americans prefer putting the month first, e.g. 12.24.2004. Beware of possible confusion. Think of the now famous 9.11, which refers to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

### 3 Titles

- Mr             = married or unmarried man
- Mrs           = married woman
- Miss          = unmarried woman
- Ms            = married or unmarried woman

### HELPDESK

'Ms' is a fairly recent title, now widely used by both married and unmarried women. It is pronounced as [mæz].

### 4 Salutation and complimentary close

- If you don't know your correspondent's name, you start with Dear Sir / Dear Madam. You will close with Yours faithfully.
- If you do know their name, you start with 'Dear Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms + a name. You will close with Yours sincerely.  
(In American English 'Sincerely' or 'Sincerely yours' can be used).

### LANGUAGE STUDY Register

Register is the words, style and grammar used by speakers and writers in a particular situation, e.g. informal or formal. What is acceptable in one situation may not be appropriate in another.

- In e-mail the rules are less strict than in so-called 'snail mail'(i.e. letters). Although you can't go wrong by sticking to more formal rules for a first contact, after initial exchange of e-mails, people tend to turn to first names much more quickly, and will sign off with more informal greetings, like 'Kind regards', 'Best regards', or 'Many thanks' instead of 'Yours sincerely' etc.
- Never use 'Hi' to open, or 'Cheers' to finish a formal or business e-mail.
- 'Greetings' is mainly for postcards, not e-mails. 'Greets' is incorrect and is not used by native speakers of English.
- Although a more informal tone may be appropriate, particularly when e-mailing to someone you deal with regularly, you should still use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Also remember to use capitals letters where necessary (e.g. in first person 'I', or each time at the beginning of a new sentence), but avoid writing whole words in capitals (e.g. URGENT), which may be interpreted as shouting and rude.

### 5 Some more rules

- Use a capital letter in the names of the month: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.
- The same goes for days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
- Do not use contracted forms in a formal letter.:
 

|                |                    |                  |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| I'm = I am     | it's = it is       | aren't = are not |
| don't = do not | haven't = have not | can't = cannot   |
- In formal written English do not use abbreviations that may be acceptable in informal (often spoken) language:  
Write:  
'because' instead of 'cause'  
'want to' instead of 'wanna'  
'going to' instead of 'gonna'
- A polite way of ending a letter is the phrase 'I look forward to...'  
Important: if it's followed by a verb, it should be in the -ing form (i.e. gerund),  
e.g. I look forward to hearing from you / to seeing you / to meeting you.
- Always sign your letter and, in snail mail, add your name in print.
- 'There is no need to add a comma behind 'Dear Ms Harris', or behind 'Yours etc'

