

Writing styles

Formal/Informal

	Formal/Neutral	Informal
Example phrases	Thank you for your email received 12 Feb. With regard/reference to ... I would be grateful if you could ... We regret to advise you that ... Please accept our apologies for ... I was wondering if you could ... We note that you have not ... We would like to remind you that ... It is necessary for me to ... It is possible that I will ... Would you like me to ...? However, ... / In addition, ... / Therefore, ... If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting you next week.	Thanks for the email. Re ... Please could you ... I'm sorry to tell you that ... I'm sorry for ... Could you ...? You haven't ... Don't forget that ... I need to ... I might ... Shall I ...? But, ... / Also, ... / So, ... If you'd like more details, let me know. See you next week.
Latin / Anglosaxon origin	assistance/due to/enquire/inform/information obtain/occupation/possess/provide/repair request/requirements/verify	help/because of/ask/tell/facts get/job/have/give/fix ask for/needs/check (prove)

Direct/Indirect

	Direct	Indirect: polite/diplomatic
Requests	Can you ...? Please could you ...	Could you ...? I was wondering if you could ...
Asking for permission	Can I ...? Could I ...?	Is it all right if I ...? I wonder if I could ...?
Offering help	Can I ...? Shall I ...?	Would you like me to ...? Do you need any help with ...?
Making a suggestion	What about ... (+ -ing)? Shall we ...?	Why don't we ...? Perhaps we should ...?
Softening a strong comment	There is a problem. That will be very expensive. We can't do that. That gives us very little time. It will be better to ask Heidi. I disagree.	I'm afraid there is a small problem. It seems there is a slight problem. That might be quite expensive. Won't that be a bit expensive? I'm not sure we can do that. Actually, that doesn't give us much time. Wouldn't it be better to ask Heidi? I can see what you're saying, but ... Don't you think that ...? To be honest, I think it might be better to ...