

Formal email asking for information

Read the following informal email and check the different parts and the language used.

- Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to enquire about the medical volunteering in Cambodia that has been advertised on your website. As a medical student, I would be very interested in participating in this program, and I would be grateful if you could give me some further details.

Firstly, according to your website, there is a minimum duration of four weeks; however, the maximum duration of the programme is not mentioned. I would appreciate it if you could tell me whether it is possible to have extended stays since I would like to work in one of your hospitals for a period of over six months.

Secondly, you also inform that only students in their 4th year of medical school can be accepted as volunteers. In my case, I have just finished my 3rd year and I would like to know if I can already be considered a 4th-year student.

Finally, I would appreciate some information about accommodation. Could you please tell me if volunteers are offered a room in a shared house? And if that is so, would you mind telling me if electricity, running water and WIFI are provided?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Derek Peters.

Check the useful language.

⇒ Greeting and signature or closing line. These are the first and last lines of an email or letter.

⇒ Opening line in the first paragraph, where you state your reason for writing, and closing line in the last paragraph.

⇒ Asking for information.

⇒ In formal letters, use indirect questions instead of direct questions.

⇒ Discourse markers used to order our points.

Structure and useful language

Greeting

The greeting is used to address your reader. If you know the person you are writing to, use 'Dear Mr' for a man and 'Dear Ms' for a woman, followed by their surname (NOT their name). If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, you can use 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

Reason for writing (paragraph one)

You should start the first paragraph by stating the purpose of your email or letter. You have some examples below:

- *I am writing to enquire about...* (the advertisement/the job offer/etc.)
- *I am writing in reference to...*
- *I am writing in connection with...*
- *I am writing to... (complain/enquire/etc.) about...*

Body

After the first paragraph, where we state the reason why we are writing, we can use one paragraph for each of the points we want to ask about. And at the beginning of each paragraph, we should use connectors to order our points.

- *Firstly/First of all, ...* (paragraph 2)
- *Secondly/In addition/I would also like to know, ...* (paragraph 3)
- *Finally, ...* (paragraph 4)

Asking for information

Here is some useful language that you can use when the purpose of your email or letter is asking for information:

- *I am writing to enquire about...*
- *I would be grateful if you could give me some information/further details about...*
- *I would appreciate some information about...*
- *I would be interested to receive further details about...*

Specific questions

In formal letters or emails, direct questions are rarely used; you should use indirect questions.

- *I would be grateful if you could tell me...* (how much the course costs/when the course starts/etc.)
- *I would appreciate it if you could tell me...*
- *I would like to know...*
- *I was wondering if you could tell me...*
- *Would you mind telling me...?*
- *Could you tell me...?*

If you have to ask several questions, you should avoid repeating the same type of indirect question all the time. Use some of the different forms above.

Closing line

Right before the signature, you should write some closing remarks. Here you have some useful language.

- *I look forward to hearing from you.*
- *I look forward to receiving the requested information.*
- *I would appreciate it if you could answer my questions as soon as possible.*

Signature

- *Yours sincerely*, (use this if you began your email or letter with *Dear* + the name of the person).
- *Yours faithfully*, (use this if you began your email or letter with *Dear Sir/Madam*).