USEFUL PHRASES FOR INFORMAL EMAIL / LETTER

The words and expressions below are often used by native speakers when writing to friends and relatives. Using them will help you write in an informal style and will also help you organise your letter into clear paragraphs. REMEMBER informal emails / letters **must be written with the appropriate structure**.

Email/Letter structure

The first thing you need to know is **the different parts of an email**:

- **Greetings:** we _greet_ the other person (i.e. say "hi" or "hello").
- **Opening paragraph:** we react to the other person's news and ask them how they are feeling and whatever else you feel is appropriate.
- **Main paragraph 1:** in this paragraph we deal with the first important point, which we can identify in the instructions.
- **Main paragraph 2:** if there is a different point to deal with, this paragraph will do so.
- **Closing paragraph:** in this paragraph we "start" to say goodbye by wishing the other person well and asking them to reply to your letter.
- **Goodbye:** we use a short expression to say goodbye.
- **Signature:** we sign the letter with our name (IT MUST BE A FAKE NAME)

Now that we know the different parts of a letter or email, we should see an example.

Let's take a look at the following **example of a Preliminary (PET) task answer for Writing Part 3**, where we can see an answer to the sample task we saw above:

- This is part of a letter you receive from an English penfriend.

In your next letter, please tell me all about your favourite TV programme. Why do you like watching it? What's it about?

- Now write a letter, answering your penfriend's questions.

- Write your **letter** on your answer sheet.

Greeting —— Dear John,

Opening p. —— It's nice to hear from you, and I'm happy to answer your questions.

Main p. 1 —— My favourite show is called "Cooking Challenge". I must say it's a great show. In this programme, there are some contestants and they must cook a meal for the judges. Then, the judges taste the dishes and decide which is the best. The winner receives a prize of 500€.

Main p. 2 —— I like it because, as you know, I love cooking, so with this programme I can learn how to prepare food in different ways.

Closing p. —— Well, I have to go now. Let me know about your favourite show, too.

Goodbye —— Best wishes,

Signature —— Luis

In the example above, you can see **the different parts of a letter or email** well defined. **It's important that your writing is visually appealing**, apart from having good grammar and vocabulary. This means that **the paragraphs should be well defined**, with a space in between, and that you should know when to break lines. This is specially important after greetings, after opening and closing

paragraphs, and after saying goodbye. This will make your text visually appealing, as it will look like a real letter or email.

Expressions to use in your email/letter

In this section, we are going to focus on **different expressions you can use in the different parts of the letter**. While the main paragraphs will vary completely depending on the topic of your writing, most of the other parts in the letter can be practised and memorised almost completely. Let's take a look:

Greetings

In order to start your **email or letter in Writing Part 3 for Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)**, you can use different expressions, which are really typical and easy to remember. We have 3 basic ways to greet in this kind of letter, which is usually for a friend or family member:

- *Hi John,*
- *Hello John,*
- *Dear John,*

Notice how "hi" is less formal than "hello" or "dear". Also, **don't forget to write a comma (,)** right after greeting your friend or relative. After greeting the addressee (i.e. the person who will read the letter), you must start **the opening paragraph in a new line**.

Opening paragraph

The opening paragraph is the place to **react to your friend's or relative's letter**. In order to do so, you can use a number of different expressions. Here we have some examples:

- *It's nice / great / good to hear from you.*
- *It's nice / great / good to read your letter.*
- *I'm glad to hear your news.*
- *I'm excited about… (your news.)*

- *It's great to hear that…*
- *I'm sorry to hear that…*
- *I'm really sorry to read your news.*
- *Thanks a lot for writing!*
- *It was good to receive your letter.*
- *Thank you very much for your letter.*

And many more. Also, it's a good idea to **ask your friend or relative how they are feeling**, which you can do like this:

- *Hope you are doing well.*
- *How's it going?*
- *How are you (doing)?*
- *How are things (going)?*

You can also add some information that you think is relevant or necessary, but don't expand this paragraph very much, because **the important information must go in the main paragraphs.**

Main paragraphs

For the main paragraphs, there aren't any fixed expressions which you must use, as it depends mostly on what you have to write about. However, you should try to **make use of connectors and appropriate punctuation**. So let's take a look at **common useful connectors and the punctuation** we use them with:

- *… and…* : to connect two similar things or ideas.

*I love reading **and** listening to music.*

*My favourite meal is fish **and** chips.*

- *…, but…* : to connect two contrasting ideas.

*I love watching Tv, **but** I don't have a favourite show.*

*I am reading a book, **but** I don't remember the title.*

- *. However, …* : to connect contrasting ideas.

Last month, I went to the cinema. **However,** *I didn't enjoy the movie.*

I am a very big fan of this author. **However,** *I haven't read his last novel.*

- *Moreover, …* : to add more information about something.
- *… because…* : to justify an opinion or idea.

My mum is the perfect cook **because** *she knows a lot of recipes and has plenty of experience.* **Moreover,** *she experiments with different ingredients all the time.*

- *. Because of that, …* : to justify an opinion, fact or idea.

My mum likes to cook using new ingredients all the time. **Because of that,** *she creates original dishes every month.*

- *. As for…/ Regarding…* : to switch to a new topic. For instance, you can use this connector to start the second main paragraph.

As for/Regarding *why I like this cookery show, I think it's because it's a great way to see new recipes.*

- Time linkers: *then, after that, yesterday, this morning, last summer, etc.*

Last night, *I watched a very good action film.*

With many connectors, we typically use a comma (,) after it when we start a sentence (e.g.: *However, Last night, Moreover, etc.*).

If you'd like to find out more connectors and discourse markers, check out Alicia's English Blog.

Closing paragraph

As we mentioned earlier, a closing paragraph in this Writing part 3 is used to start saying goodbye to the addressee and to ask for a response to your letter. So we can use the following expressions:

- *Well, it's time to say goodbye.*
- *Anyway, I have to go now.*
- *Well, it's time to go.*
- *Anyway, gotta go.*
- *I really hope to hear from you soon.*
- *I'm looking forward to hearing from you.*
- *I hope you write back soon.*
- *Make sure you write back soon.*

Also, if you still have to write more words, **you can add a question** for a subsequent letter or email. This question should be related to the topic of your piece of writing.

Saying goodbye

There are many ways in English to close an informal letter or email. The most frequently used ones are the following:

- *Best wishes,*
- *Best,*
- *Take care,*
- *All my love,*
- *Love,*
- *Lots of love,*
- *See you soon,*
- *Regards,*

Notice how **there is a comma (,) after each of the phrases**. Also, after writing any of these sentences, make sure you **write your name on a different line (fake name)**. And write your name without a full stop!