Writing Clear Work Emails as an English Learner

- Clear routine emails mean fewer misunderstandings and faster replies
- Three clarity goals: the reader knows what you want, by when, and the next step
- This training covers structure, plain English, tone, and a quick pre-send check
- We will use before/after examples, short practice tasks, and a personal checklist you keep



Where Routine Emails Go Wrong

CLEARER EMAILS BRIGHTER WORK

Small changes make a big difference.

Four common problems:
buried request, vague timing, unclear owner, tone too blunt or too soft

Why B1–B2 writers hit these:
translating from the first language, over-politeness, long sentences, hedging

The cost:
extra reply rounds, missed deadlines, readers seeing you as vague or rude

One-read test:
can the reader answer What, When, Who, and Next step?

Before

Hi team,

I hope you're all doing well. I just wanted to check in about the document we discussed last week. If possible, could you take a look when you have a moment? We really need this ASAP. Let me know your thoughts.

Thanks,
Best regards

Buried request

Vague timing

Unclear owner

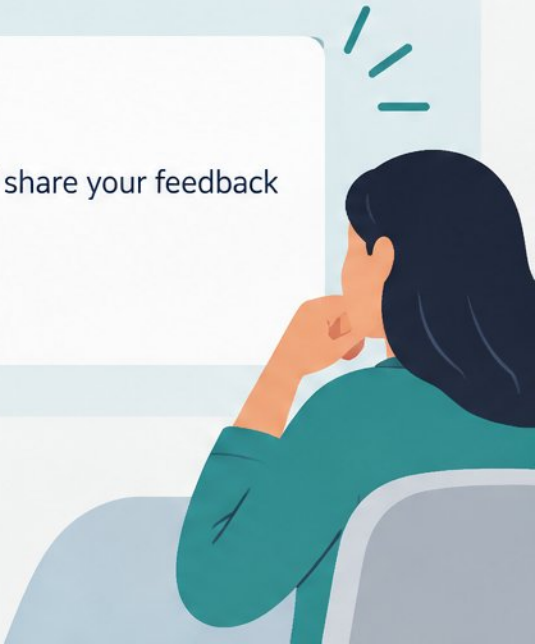
Tone too blunt or too soft

After

Hi team,

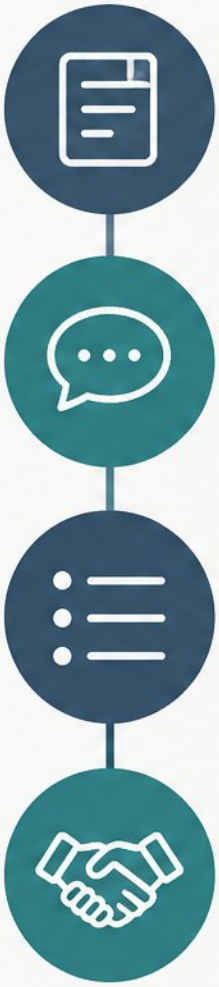
Could you review the document and share your feedback by then? I'll handle the next step.

Thanks,



SIMPLE SKILLS. BRIGHTER CONVERSATIONS.

The Four-Part Skeleton of a Clear Email



Subject line
name the topic; add action or deadline if needed

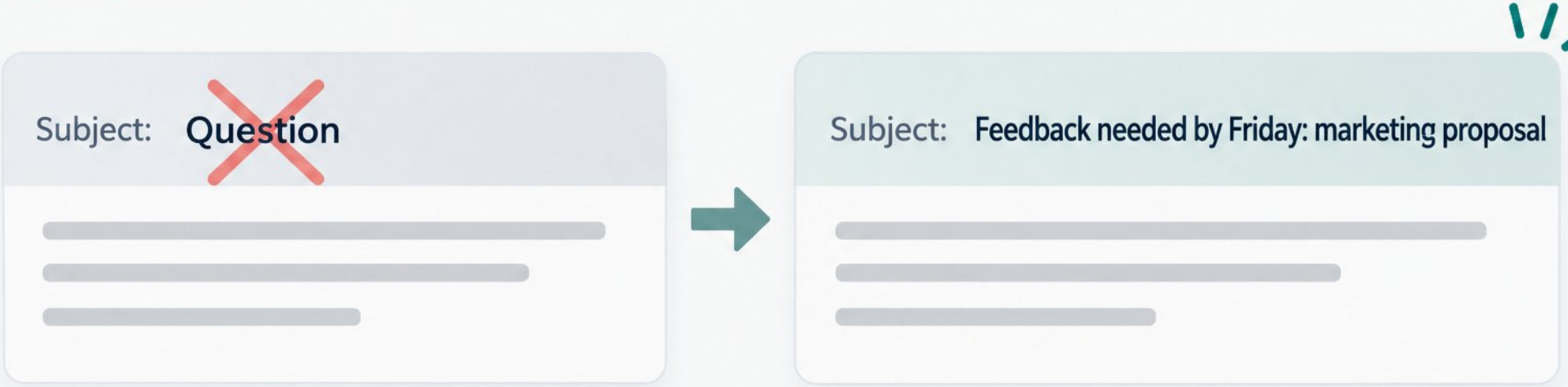
Opening line
state the purpose in one sentence, under 20 words

Body
one idea per paragraph; short bullets for details and multiple asks

Closing
restate request, deadline, and next step; use a standard sign-off

One-read test
reader can answer What, When, Who, Next step

Subject Lines That Get Opened and Found Again



- Replace vague labels like 'Question' or 'Update' with the real topic
- Add the action or deadline when needed: 'Feedback needed by Friday: marketing proposal'
- Front-load key words; phones cut long subject lines
- Change the subject when the topic of a thread changes
- Keep it short, specific, and easy to find later

Plain English: Short Sentences, Active Voice

- One idea per sentence; aim for 15–20 words on average
- Sentences over 25 words: split them into two
- Prefer active voice: “Please send the report,” not “The report should be sent”
- Use common verbs: need, not require; tell, not inform; use, not utilize
- Cut empty padding, but keep polite phrases that carry meaning

Before

The report should be sent to the team by you as soon as possible so that they can review it and provide feedback on the content before the next meeting takes place.

38 words



After

Please send the report to the team as soon as possible.

15 words

They can review it and provide feedback on the content before the next meeting takes place.

17 words

Vocabulary That Travels: Words, Phrases, and Acronyms

- Swap phrasal verbs and idioms for one clear word
- Use "tolerate," not "put up with"; "admire," not "look up to"
- Avoid idioms that translate badly: "think outside the box," "keep your eye on the ball"
- Spell out acronyms on first use: ASAP → as soon as possible
- Use one term for the same thing throughout the email



Tone: Polite, Direct, and Professional

Too blunt | **Polite and direct** | Too soft

Subject: Update

I need this today.

Subject: Follow up

Could you please share the update when you have a moment?

Subject: Quick question

I was just wondering if it might be possible to get the update, whenever you have a chance?

- Say the point early, then soften the wording—not the message
- Useful frames: “Could you please…”, “I would like to confirm…”, “Just to follow up…”
- Avoid accidental rudeness: no all-caps, no bare one-word replies, no passive-aggressive lines
- Match formality to the reader and keep one style throughout
- Greeting, body, and sign-off should sound like the same person

Requests and Deadlines: Make the Ask Easy to Answer

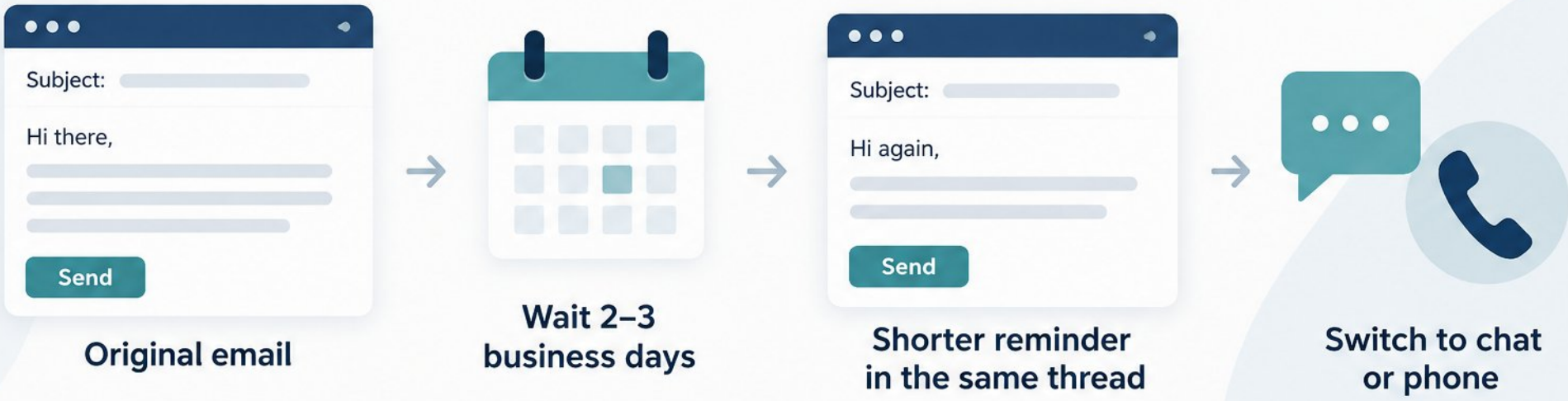
Clear requests
lead to faster answers
and better outcomes.



1. Name who does what, by when, and in what format
2. Write real deadlines: date, time, and time zone. Not "ASAP" or "at your earliest convenience"
3. Number multiple asks so each one is visible and easy to answer
4. Design an easy yes: offer two options, attach the file, name one decision
5. Say what happens if you get no reply



Follow-Ups and Reminders Without Sounding Pushy



1. Follow-up formula: reference the earlier email, restate the one request, give a new deadline, offer help
2. Wait 2–3 business days for routine asks; longer for non-urgent items
3. Reply in the same thread and make each follow-up shorter than the last
4. Say what you will do if there is no reply
5. After two failed emails, switch to chat or phone

A Five-Minute Check Before You Send

- [x] Five questions: purpose, action, deadline, tone, and no obvious errors
- [x] Edit in order: meaning and action first, then sentence length, then grammar
- [x] Read it aloud once; if it's hard to say, it's too long
- [x] Check the subject last; confirm names, dates, numbers, and attachments
- [x] Fix dates, links, and file names before you hit send

Meaning and action first

↓

Then sentence length

↓

Then grammar

↓

Check the subject last



Small Fixes That Protect Clarity

- **Articles:** "Please send the report", not "Please send report"

Before

Please send report.

After

Please send **the** report.

- **Uncountable nouns:** "information", "feedback", "advice" — no -s, no "an"

Before

We look forward to your feedbacks.

After

We look forward to your feedback.

- **Fixed patterns:** "look forward to hearing from you", "an invoice for March", "confirm receipt"

Before

We look forward to hear from you.

After

We look forward to **hearing** from you.

- **Avoid run-on sentences** joined by a comma; use a full stop or linking word

Before

I've attached the report, please confirm receipt.

After

I've attached the report. Please confirm receipt.

Reusable Templates for Routine Emails

Request

Hi [Name],

I'm writing to request [detail].

Could you please [specific action]?

Thank you,
[Your Name]

Status Update

Hi [Name],

Here's a quick update on [topic].

Things are [current status]. Next, I'll [next step].

Best,
[Your Name]

Follow-up

Hi [Name],

I'm following up on [topic].

Do you have any updates or next steps?

Thanks,
[Your Name]

Scheduling

Hi [Name],

I'd like to schedule a time to [purpose].

Are you available [day/time]?

Looking forward to it,
[Your Name]

- Four routine patterns: request, status update, follow-up, scheduling
- Use templates as skeletons; change details so the message sounds like you
- Save your best sent emails as models, and note why they worked
- For urgent or complex issues, switch to a phone call or chat



Practice: Diagnose and Rewrite a Messy Email

1. **Task 1:** Spot the buried ask, missing deadline, unclear owner, and tone problems

2. **Task 2:** Rewrite the email using the four-part skeleton and plain English

3. **Task 3:** Compare two versions — which tone fits a colleague, which a client?

Messy Email (for Practice)

Hi there,

Just circling back on a few things. I know we talked about this last week, and I'm hoping we can move it forward soon. There are still some open items, and it would be great if you could take a look when you have a moment. Let me know what you think. Also, we might need to adjust a few things depending on how it goes. Thanks!

Your Rewrite

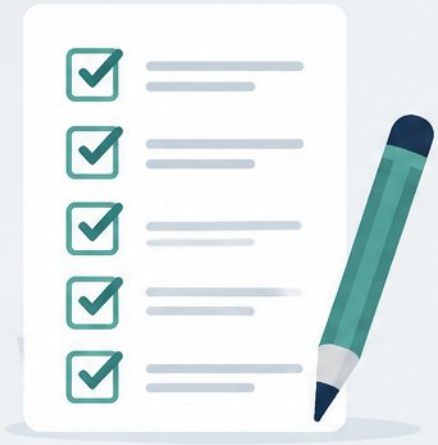


Peer review rubric

- ☐ clear purpose
- ☐ clear action
- ☐ clear deadline
- ☐ appropriate tone

Remember: the ask should appear in the first two sentences

Your Personal Email Checklist and Next Step



Personal checklist: purpose, action, deadline, tone, errors



Pick one habit this week: ask in the first two sentences



Keep a phrase bank: requests, follow-ups, sign-offs



Review one sent email weekly and note one clearer change

PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform

Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/744f15c7/public