

The art of writing business e-mails

It's easy to write an email. You type it onto a computer screen, press a button and off it goes. But the speed of the process is also a problem. It doesn't encourage us to think much about what we write. As a result, e-mail messages are often grammatically incorrect, disorganized and full of spelling and typing errors. Badly-expressed ideas are more difficult to read. They can also cause expensive misunderstandings. Managers now have to read enormous quantities of e-mails, and this contributes to the stress of their jobs. Unnecessary and badly-written messages don't help.

The object of modern business communication is to be fast and efficient. Think about ways to help the reader process the information as quickly as possible. Space is not limited in an e-mail, so you can use extra line breaks to separate text into paragraphs. This makes the message easier to read. Aim for short simple sentences too, and use a standard font in a size which is not too small and not too big.

One frequent feature of e-mail is that writers use a cheerful, informal tone. In many cases this is inappropriate, even in an internal e-mail. The tone used needs to be businesslike, but not too abrupt. You don't want to seem cold and unfriendly. For example, an opening sentence like "It was good to talk to you the other day" is a good starter before you get down to the main point of your message. On the other hand, don't waste the reader's time with a long opening paragraph full of social gossip.

Remember that an offensive message can stay on file for years. The reader can easily redistribute e-mails which reflect badly on the writer and the company represented. It may be just another message, but when you put something down in black and white, be careful what you say and how you say it.



Ex. 1 Match these adjectives from the text with their meaning:

1. incorrect	a. częsty
2. disorganized	b. niepoprawny
3. enormous	c. niestosowny
4. efficient	d. obraźliwy
5. limited	e. ograniczony
6. frequent	f. olbrzymi
7. cheerful	g. pogodny
8. inappropriate	h. szorstki
9. abrupt	i. w nieładzie
10. offensive	j. wydajny

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Ex. 2 Complete the phrases with words from the box:

break / business / frequent / message / misunderstanding / screen / space / standard / tone / typing

1. computer _____
2. _____ error
3. expensive _____
4. _____ communication
5. limited _____
6. line _____
7. _____ font
8. informal _____
9. _____ feature
10. offensive _____

Phrasals, phrasals:

Let's have a look at these sentences from this lesson's text:

"(...) an opening sentence like "It was good to talk to you the other day" is a good starter before you get down to the main point of your message." and "It may be just another message, but when you put something down in black and white, be careful what you say and how you say it." They list two new phrasal verbs:

- get down to sth
- put sth down

Which of them means zapisać coś, and which zabrać się do czegoś?

I know English idioms:

The topic of this lesson is writing e-mails. That's why the text teaches us the idiomatic expression: "in black and white", which can be translated as "czarno na białym".

How to use it? For example: It's good to have a guarantee in black and white.

Grammar corner...

Let's analyse this sentence from the lesson's text:

As a result, e-mail messages are often grammatically incorrect, disorganized and full of spelling and typing errors.

The underlined part is a useful linking phrase to express cause and effect. We can translate it as "w wyniku (czegoś)". Apart from it, there are many other phrases with a similar function.

Try and match them with their Polish equivalents:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • because of • consequently • thanks to • to lead to • to result in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ dzięki ○ pociągać za sobą ○ prowadzić do ○ w rezultacie ○ z powodu
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GLOSSARY	
to type	pisać na komputerze
screen	ekran
to press	wcisnąć
button	guzik, przycisk
speed	prędkość
to encourage	zachęcać
incorrect	niepoprawny
disorganized	w nieładzie
spelling error	błąd ortograficzny
badly-expressed	źle wyrażone
misunderstanding	nieporozumienie
enormous	olbrzymi
quantity	ilość
to contribute	przyczyniać się
efficient	wydajny
to process	przetwarzać
limited	ograniczony
line break	odstęp między wierszami
paragraph	akapit
to aim	mieć na celu
font	czcionka
frequent	częsty
feature	cecha
cheerful	pogodny
inappropriate	niestosowne
internal	wewnętrzny
businesslike	biznesowy
abrupt	szorstki
to get down to	zabrać się do czegoś
gossip	plotka/i
to waste	marnować
offensive	obraźliwy
to stay on file	pozostać
to redistribute	rozesłać
to reflect	odzwierciedlać
to put sth down	zapisać
in black and white	czarno na białym

ANSWER KEY:

Ex.1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
b	i	f	j	e	a	g	c	h	d

Ex. 2

1. computer screen
2. typing error
3. expensive misunderstanding
4. business communication
5. limited space
6. line break
7. standard font
8. informal tone
9. frequent feature
10. offensive message

Grammar corner

because of – z powodu

consequently – w rezultacie

thanks to – dzięki

to lead to – prowadzić do

to result in – pociągać za sobą