Informal and Formal Emails/Letters

First, read the information about email writing styles.

It is helpful to think about three writing styles, although in real life the differences are not so clear.

Formal — This is the style of an old-fashioned letter. Ideas are presented politely and carefully, and there is much use of fixed expressions and long words. Grammar and punctuation are important. This style is not so common, but you can find it if the subject matter is serious (for example a complaint), in emails to customers where you want to make a good impression, or in some cultures where a more formal style is expected.

Neutral — This is the most common style in professional/work emails. The writer and reader are both busy, so the language is simple, clear and direct. There is often a friendly opening line. Sentences are short and there is use of contractions (*I've* for *I have* etc.).

Informal — This is the style for emails between friends. The email might include personal news, funny comments etc. This style is close to speech, and has informal words and conversational expressions. Many people now choose social media rather than email to communicate with friends: with social media the style is even more informal.

Most real emails are basically neutral, but with some elements of formality or informality depending on the context. Mixing styles is okay to some extent, but don't mix styles at the two extremes.

A. Match the informal phrases with the formal phrases.

Informal	Formal
1. What do you need?	a) Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the meeting.
2. Thanks for your email.	b) I can assure you that...
3. Sorry, I can't make it.	c) I will take the necessary action to solve this issue.
4. Could you...?	d) Please let us know your requirements.
5. I promise...	e) I was wondering if you could...?
6. You haven't...	f) We regret to advice you that...
7. I'm sorry to tell you that...	g) Thank you for your email of 12 February.
8. I'll deal with this.	h) We note from our records that you have not...
9. Don't forget that...	i) I look forward to meeting you next week.
10. I need to ...	j) With reference to... (or regarding...)
11. Shall I...?	k) Would you like me to...?
12. But.../Also.../So...	l) I would be grateful if you could...
13. Please...	m) Please accept my apologies for...
14. I'm really sorry about...	n) It is necessary for me to...
15. Re...	o) We would like to remind you that...
16. See you next week.	p) However.../In addition.../Therefore...

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B. Match the informal words with the formal words.

Informal	Formal
1. assistance	a) soon
2. due to	b) facts
3. In the near future	c) help
4. further	d) ask for
5. inform	e) job
6. information	f) because of
7. receive	g) get
8. occupation	h) more
9. possess	i) give
10. provide	j) needs
11. request	k) have
12. requirements	l) tell

B. Match the informal words with the formal words.

Informal	Formal
1. I am writing with regard to your recent email. We regret to inform you that there are no double rooms available for the nights you require.	a) Anyway, really looking forward to it. Do u want me to bring anything?
2. Thank you so much for the wonderful present. It's exactly the book that I wanted – how did you know? I'm really looking forward to reading it.	b) You know you can count on me if you need any support. I'll call you at the weekend to see how things are.
3. Patricia, I've just read your email. I'm so sorry to hear about what happened.	c) Should you need any further information about room availability, we will be happy to assist you.
4. Aaarrgghh! Can't make it. Really sorry. But I'm sure you'll all have a great time.	d) I look forward to receiving this information as soon as possible.
5. I am mailing this via the 'Contact Us' link on your website. I'd like to know a few more details about the anti-virus software that's listed on the site.	e) It really is great news, and I'm sure that it's only the beginning of our work in the French market.
6. I am writing with reference to our order number GH674. The goods arrived this morning, but you only sent 200 pieces instead of the 300 that we ordered.	f) Please deal with this matter urgently. I expect a reply from you by 5 pm tomorrow at the latest.
7. Wow! Great! I'd love to come!	g) Thanks again for the gift, and give my very best wishes to your family.
8. I've just heard from Antonio about the Paris contract. It's fantastic news – you worked really hard on this and you deserve the success.	h) Sorry again I can't come. ☹ but let's meet up soon anyway. What about going to see that new Ang Lee movie?

LIVEWORKSHEETS