Write a tricky email



Use AI to draft a calm, polite and clear email for an awkward situation. Then make it your own.

By the end, you'll be able to:

- give AI the facts it needs to help
- check an AI draft, and change anything that isn't right
- make an email sound like you

Warm-up Which messages do you put off writing?

☐ A complaint ☐ Asking for a refund ☐ Saying no ☐ Chasing a reply ☐ An apology

1 What's wrong with this email?

Pat's boiler has been broken for two weeks. Pat wrote this first draft to the landlord, but didn't send it.

PAT'S FIRST DRAFT

I am SO fed up with you!!! Nothing ever gets fixed in this house. Sort it out NOW or else.

What's wrong with it? List two things.

2 Give AI the facts

Fill in the plan for Pat's email. Use the details above, or a situation of your own.

Who it's to	
What happened	
What you want, and by when	
How you want to sound	

Then use your plan to fill in this prompt.

PROMPT TO FILL IN

Please help me write a polite email to _ who _. I want to _ what you want _. Here's what happened: _ the facts _. I want to sound _ how _. Keep it short, in plain British English, and suggest a subject line.

> **No device?** Swap plans with a partner, and write the first two sentences of each other's email.

3 Check the AI's draft

Here's a draft an AI might write for Pat. It has **two problems**. Circle them.

AI DRAFT

Subject: Broken boiler at Flat 2

Dear Mr Lewis,

As I mentioned in our phone call on Monday, the boiler at Flat 2 has not worked for two weeks, so we have no heating or hot water. Please could you arrange for an engineer to repair it by this Friday? If it isn't fixed by then, I will take legal action.

Thank you for your help.

Best wishes,
Pat

What would you change, and why?

Remember: AI writes the draft; you decide what to send. Always read it first, and change anything that isn't true, or doesn't sound like you.

Find out more: read the free step-by-step guide, with a 10-second video, at **nosebleed.si/ideas/write-a-tricky-email**

Teacher notes: Write a tricky email

Time: 45 to 60 minutes

Level: beginners; no AI experience needed

Group: any size; works well in pairs

You'll need: a copy per learner; phones or tablets with an AI chat app (optional)

Before the session

Learners can use Pat's situation, or one of their own. If they use their own, remind them to leave out full names, addresses and account numbers.

Running order

5 min	**Warm-up.** Why some messages are hard to write.
10 min	**Part 1.** What's wrong with Pat's first draft.
15 min	**Part 2.** Fill in the plan, then the prompt. With devices, try it.
15 min	**Part 3.** Check the AI draft, then compare with any real AI drafts.
5 min	**Wrap-up.** The golden habit: read it before you send it.

Answers: Part 1

It's angry and rude, so it may make things worse. It doesn't say what's wrong (the boiler), how long for, or what Pat wants done, by when.

Answers: Part 2 (Pat's plan)

Who: the landlord.
What happened: the boiler has been broken for two weeks, so no heating or hot water.
What you want: an engineer to fix it, by a set day.
How: friendly but firm.

Answers: Part 3

1. "As I mentioned in our phone call on Monday": there was no phone call. AI sometimes adds details that aren't true.
2. "I will take legal action": Pat didn't ask for this. It's a threat that may not be right, and it makes the tone less friendly.

The rest is good: a clear subject line, the facts, a clear request with a date, and a polite ending.

Discussion points

Ask AI to "make it friendlier", "make it firmer" or "make it shorter" to change the tone.

Adapting it

Extension: write a polite reply saying no to an invitation, or chasing a reply that hasn't come.

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