Learn how to write an email to explain a problem.

Before reading
Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and tips and do the exercises.

Preparation task
Match the definitions (a–f) with the vocabulary (1–6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ...... an extension</td>
<td>a. to go to class; to be present in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ...... to attach</td>
<td>b. a long piece of writing for school or university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ...... an essay</td>
<td>c. extra time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ...... to submit</td>
<td>d. to include a file or document in an email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ...... a lecture</td>
<td>e. a university class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ...... to attend class</td>
<td>f. to send a document for somebody (like a teacher or manager) to check</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An email explaining a problem

From: Jameela Lee  
To: Professor Kim Hart  
Subject: Absence from class for two weeks  
Attached: doctor’s_certificate.pdf  

Dear Professor Hart,

I’m writing to let you know that I can’t attend class for two weeks as I’ve had an accident and hurt my back. I’m afraid I also need to ask for an extension for next week’s essay.

I have medicine for the pain but I can’t get up or walk around much, and the doctor said I should stay in bed and rest as much as possible. This makes reading and studying very difficult for me at the moment. I’ve attached a copy of the doctor’s certificate and I hope to be back in class from 12 May.

Until then, my friend is going to record the lectures so I can listen to them at home. I will try to catch up with all the reading too. However, I don’t think I can submit the essay next week. Is it possible to have an extension?

Thank you for your understanding.

Regards,

Jameela  
(ENG101 class)
Tips

1. Start with *Dear* and the person’s title and name.
2. Say what the problem is first. Then, give more details. Finally, offer a solution or say what you hope will happen next.
3. Make it short and clear. Just include the most important information.
4. Say *Thank you for your understanding* at the end. It shows that you hope the reader will understand your problems.

Tasks

**Task 1**
Are the sentences true or false?

1. Jameela can’t come to class for two months.  
   **Answer** True   False
2. The problem is with her back.  
   **Answer** True   False
3. She needs to move as much as possible.  
   **Answer** True   False
4. The doctor gave her a piece of paper to say she can’t go to classes.  
   **Answer** True   False
5. Jameela is going to listen to lectures on the internet.  
   **Answer** True   False
6. She needs more time to write her essay.  
   **Answer** True   False

**Task 2**
Match the part of the email (a–f) with the paragraph (1–6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Part of the email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. …… <em>Dear Professor Hart,</em></td>
<td>a. Closing phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. …… <em>I’m writing to let you know ...</em></td>
<td>b. Reason for writing, i.e. the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. …… <em>I have medicine ...</em></td>
<td>c. Sign off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. …… <em>Until then, ...</em></td>
<td>d. Greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. …… <em>Thank you for ...</em></td>
<td>e. The solution to the problem (including asking for help, if needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. …… <em>Regards, Jameela</em></td>
<td>f. Supporting facts and details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 3
Complete the email.

Dear Professor Mullany,

I’m to let you that I come to your next class. Unfortunately, I have to have an operation next Thursday. I’ve a copy of the letter from the hospital. Fortunately, it is only a minor operation and hopefully I will be able to come to class on Friday. Please you keep a copy of any handouts from Thursday’s class?

Thank you for your

Regards,

Sam Wood
(Class A01)

Discussion
Have you ever missed several days of work, university or school? How did you keep up with your work?
Answers

Preparation task
1. c
2. d
3. b
4. f
5. e
6. a

Task 1
1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True

Task 2
1. d
2. b
3. f
4. e
5. a
6. c

Task 3
1. Dear
2. writing
3. know
4. can’t
5. attached
6. back
7. could
8. understanding