

An email explaining a problem

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).

Vocabulary

1. an extension
2. to attach
3. an essay
4. to submit
5. a lecture
6. to attend class

Definitions

- a. to go to class; to be present in class
- b. a long piece of writing for school or university
- c. extra time
- d. to include a file or document in an email
- e. a university class
- f. to send a document for somebody (like a teacher or manager) to check

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?

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

Task 2

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

Paragraph

1. *Dear Professor Hart,*
2. *I'm writing to let you know ...*
3. *I have medicine ...*
4. *Until then, ...*
5. *Thank you for ...*
6. *Regards, Jameela*

Part of the email

- a. Closing phrase
- b. Reason for writing, i.e. the problem
- c. Sign off
- d. Greeting
- e. The solution to the problem (including asking for help, if needed)
- f. Supporting facts and details

Task 3

Complete the email.

Dear	back	writing	could
attached	can't	understanding	know

(1)..... Professor Mullany,

I'm (2)..... to let you (3)..... that I (4)..... come to your next class. Unfortunately, I have to have an operation next Thursday. I've (5)..... a copy of the letter from the hospital. Fortunately, it is only a minor operation and hopefully I will be able to come (6)..... to class on Friday. Please (7)..... you keep a copy of any handouts from Thursday's class?

Thank you for your (8).....

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