

Reviewer: Adam Simpson

Title: Email English 2nd Edition

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Publisher: Macmillan

ISBN: 978-0-230-44855-1

Summary: A thoroughly worthwhile update to a classic book about emailing which retains everything that was right about the first edition while effectively revitalizing its content a decade on from the first edition.

On very few occasions during a teacher's career will they find a book that is universally hailed by educators and learners alike as a fantastic, indispensable resource. When Macmillan first delivered Paul Emmerson's *Email English* back in 2004, it found immediate success in tapping into a market that had been crying out for a title devoted to this still emerging form of communication. Now, almost a decade on, what changes have been made to this classic text, and, importantly, how has this book adapted itself to meet the current conventions of email communication?

Like its predecessor, this 2nd Edition of *Email English* is primarily for learners of Business English who need supplementary support in the fine tuning of their writing of effective emails, as well as developing their social media communication (although by no means is it limited to this niche; it is equally useful for general English). Perhaps the clearest benefit of *Email English* is that it is based on countless real life examples, systematically presenting its users with key language for constructing effective and convincing emails, as well as developing an appropriate style for interacting on the likes of Facebook and Twitter. This feeling of working with authentic email communication is something that shone through in the first edition. This thankfully remains the case with this updated version.

Email English is an upper intermediate level book, aimed at CEF Levels B1 and B2. Its thirty-two units of study - each unit comprising two pages - cover the basics of email interaction, as well as a focus on specific situations, skills development activities, an examination of common grammar problems and a comparison of formal and informal styles. Each unit contains between three and five activities, guiding the user from recognition to simple production. The fact that there are no free writing activities indicates, as stated in the “to the teacher” introduction, that this is designed for self-study as well as classroom use. The social media section offers advice on approaches to appropriate use and key lexis for writing on social media platforms. It should be noted that the print edition contains no bonus material in the form of multimedia content (*Email English* is, however, also available as an application containing all the content from the printed book with interactive material).

So, what has been discarded and what has been retained? Firstly, the layout of the book remains ostensibly very much the same as the first edition. In the original book, we started off with several introductory units, examining issues such as formality and key phrases in email language, as well as a section called “Basic” which looked into such things as opening and closing an email, giving news, arranging meetings, negotiating, and checking understanding. The second edition sees these two sections merged. Many of the original units have survived, albeit in a sensibly and logically refined form.

The “Language Focus” section also makes it into the new edition: verb forms, punctuation and spelling and common mistakes are among the units in this somewhat expanded section of the book. This edition also retains the “Problems” and “Reports” sections of the first edition, almost in their original form, but again with a bit of worthwhile tweaking here and there. The original book rounded off its units with sections called “Direct/Indirect” and “Personal”, the former focusing on being brief and being polite, the latter looking at friendliness, giving advice and applying for a job. While these sections have disappeared, the units themselves have merely been dispersed across a number of other sections, most notably in the new “Style” part of the book. The

biggest overhaul of units has come, however, in the transformation of the “Commercial” section of the first edition into what is now named “Professional”. This section of the book retains a lot of the meatier units from the original, but is also greatly expanded. With ten units of work, this is the largest section of the second edition, containing units on arranging a meeting, the customer-supplier chain, making inquiries, discussing and agreeing terms, and arranging payment.

All in all, you get the feeling when comparing the two editions that the tweaking and rearranging has been worthwhile, and really is a reflection of the changes that have taken place in email communication during the near decade between the original and its updated counterpart. Where units have been dropped, their absence doesn’t come across as being detrimental to the book. Where units have been added, the logic behind their inclusion is apparent. The fundamental structure of each unit also remains the same, with each comprised of a lesson-friendly, two-page layout. Nevertheless, to say that the work done on the second edition is akin to retuning an engine and replacing a couple of worn out parts would be to do this update quite an injustice. The major innovations lie elsewhere.

In terms of usability, the second edition really pulls it off with huge success. As with its predecessor, this book is thoroughly suitable either for self-study or as a supplementary material for the classroom. Indeed, it would be easy to match many of the units to the type of writing exercises found in any number of traditional coursebooks. As far as the types of activity are concerned, a variety of exercise types are featured which ensure a high level of understanding and language development. While the layout of each unit aims to guide the learner from simple recognition to the point where they are ready for production, the layout might begin to feel a bit repetitive if one were to work through the book from start to finish. However, the progression of tasks is well thought out throughout the book. Nevertheless, an approach in which the user dips into individual units as and when necessary might prove to be the most rewarding way of using *Email English* in the long run.

The “Phrase bank” is another winner, consisting of phrases organised functionally which can be used to independently construct more effective emails. This section serves as a valuable halfway point for students between having to go for full production and falling back on formulaic one-size-fits-all formatted emails. Readers are presented with enough alternatives to be able to pick and choose effective lexical chunks to be able to bring an authentic feel to their email communication and yet avoid overly repetitive emails. Another clear plus of this edition is that students deal with both formal and informal emails and – importantly - learn to switch appropriately between the two. This is what makes this book so accessible to not only Business English users but to the wider General English market. This was a sensible direction to take and one which opens up the title to so many more learners.

Where the second edition really excels is in its new social media section, which presents strategies, tips, key language and expressions for writing on social media platforms such as Facebook, Google+, Linked-in and Twitter. Indeed, so important a part of the second edition is this section that the words “with new social media section” are emblazoned on the front cover. To be fair, though, what author Paul Emmerson has done here is clever. Rather than creating exercises that aim to look as if they are trying to mimic the style and feel of a Facebook page or a Twitter feed, this section has gone for the long-term in its approach. Acknowledging that such platforms regularly update their appearance, the advice here is more general yet nonetheless well-aimed. For each of the aforementioned platforms a general description is given, followed by a bullet-pointed list of reasons for using that platform, and rounded off by a list of tips on how to proceed. The focus on individual forms of social media is then followed by general tips for such communication. Examined here are issues such as formality, politeness, shortened forms of words, conventions on missing out certain words and the enticingly titled “bringing a sentence to life”. All in all, you get the sense that this is a really well thought out and executed addition to the first book. The information is practical and useful, while delivered in such a way that it won’t seem dated a year or two from now.

The first edition of *Email English* proved to be an instant classic in the world of language teaching resources. If anything, the updated version has built on this in fine style, truly delivering a resource for this second decade of the twenty-first century. Whether you're a business person looking to independently improve your Business English writing skills, or if you're a language teacher in search of a functional supplementary resource, this is the title to invest in.