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The word "Dear" disappearing in e-mails

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1101/110122-letter_writing_etiquette.html

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22nd January, 2011

THE ARTICLE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1101/110122-letter_writing_etiquette.html

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has raised an issue of letter-writing etiquette many older people have long been aware of – the disappearance of the opening word “Dear” in e-mails. WSJ reporter [Dionne Searcy](#) said times have changed regarding this traditional greeting. She wrote how Abraham Lincoln started an 1863 letter, “My dear General.” President Lincoln also started letters to Mrs Lincoln, “Dear Wife.” Ms Searcy compared this to a recent e-mail to reporters from Giselle Barry, a spokeswoman for a U.S. politician, that started “Hey, folks.” Searcy says the use of “Dear” is going the way of sealing wax and the handwritten letter. Ms Barry believes people are no longer using it because it is too intimate.

The WSJ quotes business etiquette expert Lydia Ramsey who believes people who do not start e-mails with “Dear” will “lack polish”. She says: “It sets the tone for that business relationship, and it shows respect. Email is so impersonal it needs all the help it can get.” Jean Broke-Smith, an etiquette teacher agrees. She writes on the [BBC website](#): “We're losing the art of letter writing. E-mails are becoming like texts - everyone is abbreviating. If we don't get a handle on it, future generations won't be able to spell at all.” English teacher Katie Craig offers the following advice: “The rule is, address your reader as you would in the context with which you are replacing the e-mail.” The same goes for the minefield of signing off a mail.

WARM-UPS

1. E-MAIL AND LETTERS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about e-mail and letters. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

issues / letter-writing / e-mails / greetings / reporters / handwritten letters / intimate / business etiquette / polish / relationships / losing the art / abbreviating / minefield

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. WRITING: What do you like/dislike about it? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

Writing...	Like (and why)	Dislike (and why)
e-mails		
letters		
essays		
invitations		
occasion cards		
homework		

4. DEAR: Students A **strongly** believe the word "Dear" should and will disappear completely from e-mails; Students B **strongly** believe it shouldn't and won't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. SALUTATIONS: Which do you want to use? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the one you most want to use at the top at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- Yo!
- Dear
- Hello
- My dearest darling
- To whom it may concern
- Sir/Madam
- Hi
- No salutation

6. LETTERS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'letters'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1101/110122-letter_writing_etiquette.html

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Many older people are not aware that "Dear" is disappearing" | T / F |
| b. President Abraham Lincoln wrote "Dear Wife" in letters to Mrs Lincoln. | T / F |
| c. A U.S. politician's spokeswoman said the use of "Hey, folks" is bad. | T / F |
| d. The spokeswoman believes the use of "Dear" is too personal. | T / F |
| e. An etiquette expert said people need to polish their keyboards. | T / F |
| f. A teacher said the letter-writing art is getting better as we write more. | T / F |
| g. The teacher suggested people in the future will be poor at spelling. | T / F |
| h. A teacher says signing off e-mails also presents many problems. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. raised | a. personal |
| 2. etiquette | b. following |
| 3. greeting | c. protocol |
| 4. going the way of | d. sophistication |
| 5. intimate | e. salutation |
| 6. expert | f. closing |
| 7. polish | g. specialist |
| 8. abbreviating | h. call |
| 9. address | i. brought up |
| 10. signing off | j. shortening |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. letter-writing | a. of sealing wax |
| 2. people have long | b. it is too intimate |
| 3. a recent e-mail | c. handle on it |
| 4. going the way | d. been aware of |
| 5. no longer using it because | e. polish |
| 6. lack | f. off a mail |
| 7. it shows | g. etiquette |
| 8. If we don't get a | h. respect |
| 9. address your | i. to reporters |
| 10. signing | j. reader |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has raised an (1) _____ of letter-writing etiquette many older people have long been (2) _____ of – the disappearance of the opening word “Dear” in e-mails. WSJ reporter Dionne Searcy said (3) _____ have changed regarding this traditional (4) _____. She wrote how Abraham Lincoln started an 1863 letter, “My dear General.” President Lincoln also started letters to Mrs Lincoln, “Dear Wife.” Ms Searcy (5) _____ this to a recent e-mail to reporters from Giselle Barry, a spokeswoman for a U.S. politician, that started “Hey, folks.” Searcy says the (6) _____ of “Dear” is going the (7) _____ of sealing wax and the handwritten letter. Ms Barry believes people are no longer using it because it is too (8) _____.

greeting

aware

intimate

use

times

issue

way

compared

The WSJ quotes business etiquette (9) _____ Lydia Ramsey who believes people who do not start e-mails with “Dear” will “lack (10) _____”. She says: “It sets the tone for that business relationship, and it shows respect. Email is so (11) _____ it needs all the help it can get.” Jean Broke-Smith, an etiquette teacher agrees. She writes on the BBC website: “We’re losing the (12) _____ of letter writing. E-mails are becoming like texts - everyone is abbreviating. If we don’t get a (13) _____ on it, future generations won’t be able to (14) _____ at all.” English teacher Katie Craig (15) _____ the following advice: “The rule is, address your reader as you would in the context with which you are replacing the e-mail.” The same goes for the minefield of (16) _____ off a mail.

art

polish

spell

signing

expert

handle

offers

impersonal

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

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The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has _____ letter-writing etiquette many older people have _____ - the disappearance of the opening word "Dear" in e-mails. WSJ reporter Dionne Searcy said times have changed regarding _____. She wrote how Abraham Lincoln started an 1863 letter, "My dear General." President Lincoln also started letters to Mrs Lincoln, "Dear Wife." Ms Searcy compared _____ e-mail to reporters from Giselle Barry, a spokeswoman for a U.S. politician, that started "Hey, folks." Searcy says the use of "Dear" is _____ sealing wax and the handwritten letter. Ms Barry believes people are no longer using it because _____.

The WSJ quotes business etiquette expert Lydia Ramsey who believes people who do not start e-mails with "Dear" _____. She says: "It sets the tone for that business relationship, and it shows respect. Email is so impersonal it needs all _____." Jean Broke-Smith, an etiquette teacher agrees. She writes on the BBC website: "We're _____ letter writing. E-mails are becoming like texts - everyone is abbreviating. If we don't _____, future generations won't be able to spell at all." English teacher Katie Craig offers the following advice: "_____ your reader as you would in the context _____ replacing the e-mail." The same goes for the minefield _____ mail.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1101/110122-letter_writing_etiquette.html

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'lack' and 'polish'.

lack	polish
-------------	---------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• raised• aware• times• 1863• hey• longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lack• shows• help• art• handle• address
--	--

STUDENT E-MAIL AND LETTERS SURVEY

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Write five GOOD questions about e-mail and letters in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

E-MAIL AND LETTERS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'dear'?
- c) Do you ever worry about how to start or finish an e-mail or letter?
- d) Is letter writing in your own language the same as that in English?
- e) Do you prefer writing e-mail or letters?
- f) What do you think people would say about your letter-writing etiquette?
- g) Does it matter if the word "Dear" disappears from letters?
- h) Would you like to go back to the days when people wrote, "Dear Wife" and "Dear Husband"?
- i) Is it really a sign of intimacy to start a letter with "Dear"?
- j) Which is better in an e-mail, "Hey, folks," "Dear" or "Hi"?

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E-MAIL AND LETTERS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think it's important to show "polish" in e-mails?
- c) Are things like e-mail and texting making younger people poorer at language in your country?
- d) Is it important to show respect when writing e-mails?
- e) Do you prefer receiving e-mail or hand-written letters?
- f) What is the "art" of letter-writing?
- g) Does it matter that everyone is abbreviating? Isn't that a sign of the normal development of language and communication?
- h) Is it better to use "Dear" with someone's first name or family name?
- i) Is signing off e-mails a "minefield"?
- j) What questions would you like to ask an expert in letter-writing etiquette?

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LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

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The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has (1) ____ an issue of letter-writing etiquette many older people have long been aware of – the disappearance (2) ____ the opening word “Dear” in e-mails. WSJ reporter Dionne Searcy said (3) ____ have changed regarding this traditional greeting. She wrote (4) ____ Abraham Lincoln started an 1863 letter, “My dear General.” President Lincoln also started letters to Mrs Lincoln, “Dear Wife.” Ms Searcy compared this to a recent e-mail to reporters from Giselle Barry, a spokeswoman for a U.S. politician, that started “Hey, folks.” Searcy says the use of “Dear” is going the (5) ____ of sealing wax and the handwritten letter. Ms Barry believes people are no longer using it because it is too (6) ____.

The WSJ (7) ____ business etiquette expert Lydia Ramsey who believes people who do not start e-mails with “Dear” will “lack polish”. She says: “It sets the (8) ____ for that business relationship, and it (9) ____ respect. Email is so impersonal it needs all the help it can get.” Jean Broke-Smith, an etiquette teacher agrees. She writes on the BBC website: “We’re (10) ____ the art of letter writing. E-mails are becoming like texts - everyone is abbreviating. If we don’t get a handle on it, future generations won’t be able to spell at (11) ____.” English teacher Katie Craig offers the following advice: “The rule is, address your reader as you would in the context with which you are replacing the e-mail.” The same (12) ____ for the minefield of signing off a mail.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) raised | (b) upped | (c) increased | (d) heightened |
| 2. | (a) by | (b) of | (c) for | (d) from |
| 3. | (a) timings | (b) timers | (c) times | (d) old timers |
| 4. | (a) why | (b) what | (c) when | (d) how |
| 5. | (a) day | (b) lay | (c) may | (d) way |
| 6. | (a) animated | (b) animate | (c) intimidate | (d) intimate |
| 7. | (a) quotes | (b) quotations | (c) quests | (d) quips |
| 8. | (a) bone | (b) tone | (c) hone | (d) cone |
| 9. | (a) shares | (b) shelves | (c) shows | (d) sheds |
| 10. | (a) losing | (b) hiring | (c) allowing | (d) typing |
| 11. | (a) every | (b) whole | (c) entire | (d) all |
| 12. | (a) comes | (b) goes | (c) visits | (d) leaves |

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WRITING

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Write about **e-mail and letters** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about how to greet and sign off in e-mails and letters. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. E-MAIL AND LETTERS: Make a poster about e-mail and letters. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. OH DEAR: Write a magazine article about the disappearance of the word "Dear" in e-mail. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against it.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to a letter-writing expert. Ask him/her three questions about e-mails and letters. Give him/her three of your opinions on how to start and sign off e-mails and letters. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. raised | a. brought up |
| 2. etiquette | b. protocol |
| 3. greeting | c. salutation |
| 4. going the way of | d. following |
| 5. intimate | e. personal |
| 6. expert | f. specialist |
| 7. polish | g. sophistication |
| 8. abbreviating | h. shortening |
| 9. address | i. call |
| 10. signing off | j. closing |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. letter-writing | a. etiquette |
| 2. people have long | b. been aware of |
| 3. a recent e-mail | c. to reporters |
| 4. going the way | d. of sealing wax |
| 5. no longer using it because | e. it is too intimate |
| 6. lack | f. polish |
| 7. it shows | g. respect |
| 8. If we don't get a | h. handle on it |
| 9. address your | i. reader |
| 10. signing | j. off a mail |

GAP FILL:

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The WSJ quotes business etiquette (9) **expert** Lydia Ramsey who believes people who do not start e-mails with "Dear" will "lack (10) **polish**". She says: "It sets the tone for that business relationship, and it shows respect. Email is so (11) **impersonal** it needs all the help it can get." Jean Broke-Smith, an etiquette teacher agrees. She writes on the BBC website: "We're losing the (12) **art** of letter writing. E-mails are becoming like texts - everyone is abbreviating. If we don't get a (13) **handle** on it, future generations won't be able to (14) **spell** at all." English teacher Katie Craig (15) **offers** the following advice: "The rule is, address your reader as you would in the context with which you are replacing the e-mail." The same goes for the minefield of (16) **signing** off a mail.

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - b 3 - c 4 - d 5 - d 6 - c 7 - a 8 - b 9 - c 10 - a 11 - d 12 - b

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