

3.2 Informal email — structure and useful language

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 15 marks

KEY WORDS closing 结束语 • greeting 问候语 • paragraphs 段落 • informal 非正式 • informal email 非正式电子邮件

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on the **structure and useful language of an informal email** 结构与常用语言 — opening, ordering and closing an email so it reads naturally.

You must be able to:

- open and close an email appropriately
- use one paragraph per content point
- use a range of natural informal expressions accurately

1 Worked examples

■ The shape of an informal email

1. **Greeting** — *Hi Mei, / Hello Ana, / Dear Sam,*
2. **Opening line** — react to their news or apologise for the delay: *Sorry it has taken me so long to reply.*
3. **One paragraph per content point**
4. **Closing move** — an invitation, a question or a promise: *Let me know what you think.*
5. **Sign-off** — *Love, / Best wishes, / See you soon,* then your name

■ Useful language you can prepare

- **Opening:** *Thanks for your message. / It was great to hear from you. / Sorry for the slow reply.*
- **Giving news:** *Guess what — / You will not believe this, but / The big news is that*
- **Reacting:** *That sounds amazing. / I am so sorry to hear that. / How annoying!*
- **Inviting:** *Why don't you come and stay? / Any chance you could visit in the holidays?*
- **Closing:** *Write back soon. / Say hello to your family from me. / Can't wait to hear from you.*

Learning six of these properly is worth more than trying to invent them under pressure.

■ **What weakens an email**

- Starting straight into the content with no greeting or opening line.
- Repeating *and then... and then...* instead of varying the connectives.
- A formal sign-off such as *Yours faithfully* on an email to a friend.

2 Practice

2.1 Write a suitable opening line for each situation.

- (a) Your friend has just passed an important exam. [1]

- (b) You have not replied to your friend for a month. [1]

2.2 Rewrite these sentences so they sound natural in an informal email.

- (a) “I wish to inform you that I shall be visiting in July.” [1]

- (b) “I request that you respond at your earliest convenience.” [1]

2.3 Put these parts of an email in the correct order: sign-off, greeting, content paragraphs, opening line, closing move. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Your friend has asked for advice about choosing subjects for next year. Write an email replying. Say which subjects you chose and why, warn them about one difficulty, and offer to talk it over. Write about 120 words. [8]

3.2 A student ends an email to a friend with “Yours faithfully, Chen Wei”. Explain what is wrong and give two suitable alternatives. [2]

Solutions

2.1 (a) Any natural congratulation, e.g. “Congratulations — I knew you would do it!”.
(b) Any natural apology, e.g. “Sorry it has taken me so long to write back; things have been busy here.”

2.2 (a) “Good news — I’m coming to visit in July!” (b) “Let me know as soon as you can.”

2.3 greeting, opening line, content paragraphs, closing move, sign-off.

3.1 Content (4 marks): the three points covered and developed. Language (4 marks): consistently informal, varied and accurate expressions, clear paragraphs, appropriate greeting and sign-off, roughly within the limit.

3.2 “Yours faithfully” is a formal sign-off used in a letter to someone whose name you do not know, so it does not match an email to a friend. Suitable alternatives: “Love”, “Best wishes”, “See you soon”, “Take care” — any two.