

Winning the 15-minute email reply

AP French Language and Culture · Lesson

This AP French lesson explains **AP French email reply** step by step, with examples in French and English. Then practise with the worksheet on AP French email reply and check yourself with the quiz.

Quick answer: The AP email reply is a 15-minute task: read a short French email, then write a formal reply that greets the sender, answers every question with details, asks at least one question of your own, and closes politely. Use *vous* throughout and keep the tone respectful.

Level: AP French Language and Culture · **Standards:** AP French Language and Culture (College Board CED), Interpersonal Writing

AP French email reply: the lesson

What does the AP email reply task ask you to do?

In the Interpersonal Writing task, you read a short email from a French-speaking person (a program director, a host family, a school secretary) and write a reply. The score depends on how fully you answer, how well you keep a formal register, and how accurate and varied your French is.

Definition: formal email reply

A message that opens with a greeting, thanks the sender, answers each question in order with details, asks for information in return, and ends with a polite closing formula. It uses *vous*, never *tu*.

Objet : Votre invitation
Madame, Monsieur,
Je vous remercie de votre message.
Réponse 1 + détails...
Réponse 2 + exemple...
Pourriez-vous me préciser... ?
Cordialement, Nadia

1. objet
2. salutation
3. remerciement
4. réponses
5. vos questions
6. formule finale

Anatomy of a formal email reply.

How is a formal reply built, step by step?

Part	Useful French	Meaning
Greeting	Madame, Monsieur, / Madame Diallo,	Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Mrs. Diallo
Thanks	Je vous remercie de votre message.	Thank you for your message.
Purpose	Je vous écris pour répondre à vos questions.	I am writing to answer your questions.
Detail question	Pourriez-vous me préciser les dates ?	Could you tell me the dates?
Closing	Dans l'attente de votre réponse, je vous prie d'agréer mes salutations distinguées.	Looking forward to your reply, sincerely.

Rule: ask politely

Use the conditional or est-ce que with vous: Pourriez-vous m'indiquer..., Je voudrais savoir si..., J'aimerais connaître.... Avoid blunt commands such as Dites-moi.

How do you answer every question and add details?

Underline each question in the prompt, then answer in the same order. For each answer, add one reason or example. If the sender asks *Pourquoi voulez-vous participer ?*, do not write only *Parce que j'aime le français*. Write instead: *Je voudrais participer parce que je prépare un échange à Dakar et que ma famille d'accueil parle wolof*.

Connectors that add depth

- d'abord, ensuite, enfin — first, then, finally
- par exemple — for example
- en effet — indeed
- cependant — however

lire 2	1	écrire 10 min	2
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plan : 1 min — relecture : 2 min

A realistic 15-minute plan.

Common mistake

English speakers often write *Je veux savoir* or use *tu* because the prompt feels friendly. In a formal reply, write *Je voudrais savoir* and keep *vous*.

Zoé's tip

Before writing, jot a mini-list: question 1, question 2, question 3, plus my own question. Tick each one off. Nothing beats a checklist when the clock is running!

Culture note

In France and in Québec, formal emails often end with *Cordialement* for everyday professional contact, and a longer formula such as *Veuillez agréer...* for an official request.

Key points to remember

- You get about 15 minutes in total to read the message and write the reply.
- A complete reply answers every question in the prompt and asks for details in return.
- The register is formal: *vous*, polite conditionals, a proper greeting and closing.
- Graders reward development: reasons, examples and connectors, not one-word answers.
- Reread for accents, agreement and verb endings during the last two minutes.

Winning the 15-Minute Email Reply: frequently asked questions

How long should an AP email reply be?

Aim for a full, developed message of roughly 150 to 200 words if you can. Quality matters more than raw length, but one-line answers rarely earn top scores.

Should I use *tu* or *vous* in the AP email reply?

Use *vous* whenever the sender is an adult, an organization or a person you do not know. Staying consistent with *vous* for the entire message is part of the formal register that graders look for.

Do I have to ask a question back?

Yes. The task asks you to request details, so include at least one polite question, such as asking about dates, costs or what to bring.

What if I do not know a word during the task?

Use circumlocution: describe the idea with words you know, for example *la personne qui travaille à la bibliothèque*. Do not stop writing to search for one word.

Does the greeting count in the 15 minutes?

Yes, everything counts. Memorize a short opening and closing so that you can write them in under a minute and save time for the answers.