

These original email and academic-discussion examples show how a response meets a specific task. Each stronger response is paired with a deliberately weaker diagnostic response and commentary. The book does not predict an official score or reproduce ETS questions. Write your own response before reading a model; another well-supported answer can also be effective.

1. Email: resolve a room-booking conflict

I STRONGER RESPONSE. You booked a room for a group rehearsal, but another event now appears at the same time. Email the room coordinator: explain your booking, say why the room matters, and request a workable solution.

Dear Room Coordinator,

I am writing about our booking for Cedar Room on Thursday from three to four. Our four-person seminar group received a confirmation on Monday, but the calendar now shows a staff meeting in the same room during that hour.

We need a quiet space with a screen to rehearse our presentation before Friday’s class. Meeting in the café would make it difficult to hear each speaker and check the slides. Could you confirm which booking is valid? If the staff meeting must use Cedar Room, another quiet room with a screen at the same time would also work for us.

I can forward the confirmation if that would help. Please let us know before Wednesday afternoon so we can tell everyone where to meet.

Thank you for your help,

Lin

The message identifies the room and exact slot, explains the screen requirement and offers an acceptable alternative. The requested reply time gives the coordinator a practical next action without claiming the competing booking is invalid.

I WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Dear Coordinator,

Our group has a presentation soon, and finding a good room is very important. We have worked hard on the slides and would like to practise them together. Some students are confident speakers, while others need more time to prepare. A room can make a large difference because it gives people somewhere to meet.

I looked at the calendar and noticed something confusing. It seems that another activity may be happening when we want to rehearse. We would appreciate a suitable solution because the presentation will count towards our course. A quiet room is better than a noisy place, and we hope the college can support students who are preparing carefully.

Please reply when you can. We are waiting for more information.

Best wishes,

Lin

The tone is polite, but the coordinator cannot locate the booking: the room, day and time are absent. “A suitable solution” is vague. Add the booking details, specific needs and a clear request rather than more general praise of preparation.

2. Email: request a realistic extension

I STRONGER RESPONSE. A broken laptop delayed your project report. Email your tutor: explain what happened, describe work already completed, and request a short extension with a proposed submission date.

Dear Dr Patel,

I am writing to ask whether I could submit my project report on Monday instead of this Friday. My laptop stopped working yesterday, and the repair centre says it will not be ready until the weekend.

I have completed the reading and drafted the introduction and methods sections. Those files are backed up, so I can continue using a library computer. However, I still need to check the results table and revise the discussion. The reduced computer access will make the original deadline difficult to meet.

Would a Monday submission be acceptable? I can send the current draft today so you can see my progress. If an extension is not possible, please let me know whether there is another approved way to submit the work I have completed.

Thank you for considering my request,

Wei

The request acknowledges the original deadline, identifies completed sections and proposes Monday. It shows a backup plan without claiming entitlement to approval. The tutor can decide using concrete information.

I WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Dear Dr Patel,

I have had a difficult week because my laptop is broken. Computers are important for students, especially when they have several assignments. I usually try to complete my work on time, and I understand that deadlines are necessary. This problem was unexpected and has made me worried about my report.

I hope you will be understanding and allow me some extra time. I will continue working as much as possible because I want to produce a good report. I have been thinking about the topic for several weeks, and there are many useful ideas that I would like to include. It would be unfortunate to rush everything and submit a weak piece of work.

Please give me more time to finish it properly.

Kind regards,

Wei

The response explains the problem but omits completed work and a proposed date. Its general statements about computers use space without helping the tutor decide. Replace them with progress, remaining tasks and a bounded request.

3. Email: correct a volunteer notice

| STRONGER RESPONSE. You help organise a fictional community clean-up. A notice gives the wrong meeting point. Email the organiser: identify the error, explain its likely effect, and suggest how to correct the information before the event.

Dear Ms Chen,
I noticed an error in the clean-up notice posted this morning. It asks volunteers to meet at the west gate, but our planning email says the equipment will be distributed at the east gate beside the storage room.
If volunteers follow the notice, they may wait at the wrong entrance and miss the safety briefing. Some people will also be arriving by bus, so a last-minute walk around the park could delay the start.
Could we confirm that the east gate is correct and replace the notice today? It would also help to send a correction to everyone who registered, since changing the printed version alone will not reach people who already photographed it. I can prepare the revised text for you to check before it is shared.
Thank you,
Alex

The email contrasts the two entrances, connects the error to the briefing and considers people who already saved the notice. Confirming the point before sharing a correction avoids spreading a second unverified version.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Dear Ms Chen,
The notice for our clean-up is not correct. We should be careful when sharing information because volunteers give their time to help the community. They deserve an event that is well organised, and an inaccurate notice does not create a good impression. I think we should improve the way we prepare notices in the future.
Many people may attend, and some will come from quite far away. If things are confusing, they could be disappointed. I am happy to help because I care about the event and would like it to be successful. We should review everything, including the equipment and the schedule, before people arrive.
Please make the necessary changes as soon as possible. I hope the event goes well.
Best wishes,
Alex

The error is never identified precisely, and “necessary changes” supplies no correction plan. The broad criticism of organisation distracts from the immediate problem. Name both meeting points and suggest updating existing recipients as well as the notice.

4. Email: propose a discussion-club activity

| STRONGER RESPONSE. Your college discussion club is looking for a new activity. Email its leader: propose an activity, explain how it would help members, and describe what is needed to organise it.

Dear Sam,
I would like to suggest a short “explain a useful idea” session for next month’s discussion-club meeting. Members could bring an everyday topic, such as how to compare two travel routes, and explain it in two minutes. A partner would then ask one clarification question.
This would give quieter members a manageable speaking task while helping everyone practise listening for another person’s meaning. Keeping the topics familiar would allow us to concentrate on explanation rather than specialist knowledge.
We would need a timer, a list of sample topics and pairs arranged before the session. With twelve members, three pairs could speak at a time in different corners of the room. Could we try this for twenty minutes at the next meeting? I can prepare the topic list if you approve the idea.
Best wishes,
Maya

The proposal is an actual activity, not only a goal. It explains the turn structure, resources and a limited trial, and offers specific help. Member support is not presented as already obtained.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Dear Sam,
Our discussion club is a useful place for students to improve their English. I enjoy meeting people there and hearing different ideas. It is important that the club continues to offer interesting activities because members may become bored if every meeting follows the same pattern.
I suggest doing something connected with speaking and listening. These skills are valuable at college and in future jobs. Members should have opportunities to communicate more confidently and learn from each other. A new activity could also attract more students who have not attended before.
We can organise it at a future meeting if there is enough time. I am willing to help, and I am sure other members will support the plan. Please tell me what you think about adding a different activity.
Best wishes,
Maya

The response discusses benefits without defining what participants will do. It also assumes support from others. Add task steps, duration, practical requirements and an offer that the writer can personally fulfil.

5. Email: report an equipment problem

| STRONGER RESPONSE. A borrowed camera has an unreliable battery. Email the equipment desk: identify the loan and problem, explain the effect on your project, and ask for help while describing how you can return or exchange it.

Dear Equipment Team,
I borrowed camera C14 yesterday for our history-project interviews. The battery indicator drops to empty after about ten minutes, even after charging it according to the supplied instructions. I have not opened the camera or tried to repair it.
We planned to record two interviews on Friday afternoon. If the battery stops during a recording, we may lose part of a participant’s answer and need to arrange another meeting. Could you check the camera and let us know whether a tested replacement battery or another camera is available?
I can bring C14 and its charger to the desk tomorrow between noon and two. Please tell me if that time is suitable or if you need any further loan details. We will wait for your advice before using it again.
Thank you,
Nora

The loan ID, observed ten-minute behaviour and charging attempt help diagnosis. The writer explains the recording risk, requests two possible solutions and offers a return window without proposing an unsafe repair.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Dear Equipment Team,
The camera I borrowed is not working well, and this is a serious problem for our project. We have spent a lot of time preparing interviews, so it would be disappointing if the recordings failed. Good equipment is essential when students are doing research and collecting information from other people.
I tried using the camera, but something happened with the battery. It did not seem normal. I hope you can solve the problem because our group needs to continue with the project soon. We would prefer not to change all our plans, especially after making arrangements with the people we want to interview.
Please provide some help as quickly as possible. I can return the equipment when I have time, and I look forward to your reply.
Regards,
Nora

The equipment cannot be identified easily, the battery symptom is vague and the return time is unspecified. Replace general complaints with observable behaviour, a loan identifier and a concrete exchange arrangement.

6. Email: resolve a group contribution problem

| STRONGER RESPONSE. One group member has missed an agreed draft deadline. Email that member: describe the missing work and its effect, ask about any difficulty, and propose a next step that keeps the project moving.

Hi Daniel,
We expected the two comparison paragraphs yesterday, but they are not in the shared folder yet. The group needs them before we can combine the sections and check that our conclusion matches the evidence. Is there a problem with the research or with accessing the folder? Please let us know what is complete and which part is holding you up. If you can send your current notes tonight, we could help turn them into a draft during tomorrow’s meeting.
Our final editing session is Thursday, so could you confirm by this evening whether a draft tomorrow is realistic? If not, we should discuss a new task split together rather than leave the section empty. I do not want to assume you have done nothing when there may be an issue we can solve.
Thanks,

Jia
The message names the missing paragraphs, explains the dependency, asks rather than assumes, and sets a practical reply point. It offers support and makes a changed task split a group decision.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Hi Daniel,
You have not sent your work, and everyone is worried about the project. Group work depends on people being responsible, because one person can make things difficult for all the others. We have put a great deal of effort into this assignment and want to receive a good result.
I think you should understand how important it is to finish your part. There is not much time left, and we cannot keep waiting. If you do not send something soon, we may have to do everything ourselves. That would not be fair to the students who have already completed their tasks.
Please remember that we are a team and that teamwork requires effort from every member. I hope you will become more reliable and help us finish.
Jia

The response focuses on blame while failing to name the missing section or a specific next deadline. It never asks what difficulty exists. A more useful message requests progress and proposes a bounded recovery step.

7. Discussion: support for first-year students

STRONGER RESPONSE. Professor: Should a college require all first-year students to attend weekly study-planning sessions? Ana: Yes; students need routines before they fall behind. Leo: No; experienced students should choose the help they need. Write your own contribution with a developed reason and engage with a classmate.

I would make an introductory planning session compulsory, but keep later weekly sessions optional. Ana is right that new students may not recognise a problem until several deadlines arrive together. An early session could show everyone how to map assignments and find support before that happens. However, I agree with Leo that the same weekly requirement may not help every student. Someone who already uses an effective planner could spend that hour completing work instead. For example, a student taking a heavy laboratory course may need help with a particular report schedule rather than repeated general advice. The college could offer brief follow-up appointments and targeted workshops after the introduction. This would establish a shared starting point without assuming that every student needs identical support throughout the term.

The writer answers the compulsory-weekly question with a qualified policy, connects Ana’s prevention argument with Leo’s flexibility point and develops a concrete example. The alternative is explained rather than simply named.

WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

I agree that students should receive support because college can be difficult. Ana has made a good point, and Leo has also said something important. Planning is a skill that everybody should learn, and students who plan well are more likely to succeed in their studies. There are many reasons why planning matters. Students have assignments, examinations and other responsibilities. Sometimes they also need to take part in clubs or meet friends. Without a plan, they can forget what to do and feel worried about their work. Therefore, colleges should think carefully about helping students. Different students have different needs, and teachers should give useful advice. I believe a good support system would be valuable because education is important for everyone’s future.

The post praises both classmates but does not engage with their actual disagreement. It never decides whether weekly attendance should be compulsory. General statements about planning need to support a clear position on the specific question.

8. Discussion: repairing versus replacing equipment

STRONGER RESPONSE. Professor: How should a college choose between repairing old equipment and buying replacements? Omar: Repair should be the default because it avoids unnecessary purchases. Priya: Reliability matters more; repeated breakdowns waste students’ time. Contribute your own supported position and respond to a classmate.

I think the college should compare the likely usefulness of a repair with the cost of repeated disruption, rather than always choosing one option. Omar’s concern about unnecessary purchases is reasonable: replacing a machine with a small, fixable fault can waste a useful resource. Priya is also right that reliability affects students. If a printer fails during every busy week, a cheap repair may still leave people unable to complete work on time. The college could keep a fault record showing what went wrong, how long the machine was unavailable and whether the same problem returned. For example, replacing a damaged cable once differs from repeatedly repairing a part that continues to fail. Those records would help staff justify a decision without assuming that either repair or replacement is automatically the responsible choice.

The post engages with both resource use and reliability, develops the distinction between a one-off fault and repeated failure, and proposes relevant records. It does not invent measured savings or environmental results.

WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

I believe repairing equipment is better because buying new things is expensive. Omar is correct that colleges should avoid unnecessary purchases. Money is useful for many activities, so we should not spend it carelessly. Students need good classrooms, books and helpful teachers, and these things also require money. Priya mentions reliability, but I do not think this is an important concern. Old equipment can always be repaired if the college finds a good technician. After a repair, it will work well again. There is no reason to replace something unless it has completely disappeared or cannot be found. In conclusion, repairing is always the best answer. It will save money and improve the environment at the same time, so every college should follow this approach.

The claims that old equipment can always be repaired and that every repair restores reliability are unsupported. The response dismisses Priya’s concern instead of answering it and promises cost/environmental benefits without comparing the options.

9. Discussion: local examples in teaching

| STRONGER RESPONSE. Professor: Should lecturers use mainly local examples or examples from many different places? Mei: Local examples are easier to understand because students know the context. Tomas: Wider examples prepare us to work with unfamiliar situations. Add a supported position and engage with a classmate.

I would begin with a familiar example and then compare it with a less familiar one. Mei is right that a known setting lets students focus on the new concept instead of struggling with every detail at once. A lesson on transport demand could start with the bus route students use to reach campus. However, Tomas’s point matters once students understand the basic relationship. A second example from a place with different travel patterns would test whether they can apply the idea rather than merely recall the first story. The lecturer should provide enough context to make that comparison fair. Using the two examples in sequence would therefore offer both an accessible starting point and a chance to transfer knowledge. Familiarity would support learning without becoming its permanent boundary.

The contribution answers the choice with a sequence, develops a transport example and explains why the second context tests transfer. It responds to the classmates’ reasons rather than simply mentioning their names.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

Examples are very important in teaching because they help students understand information. Mei thinks local examples are helpful, and Tomas thinks examples from other places are helpful. Both students have interesting opinions, and lecturers should consider what they have said. There are many kinds of examples. Some can be short, while others can be long. Sometimes a lecturer uses a picture, and sometimes they tell a story. Students may enjoy these methods because listening to facts for an entire lesson can become boring. It is good when a teacher makes an effort to explain things clearly. I think lecturers should use effective examples. They should choose the ones that work best and avoid the ones that do not work. This would help students learn more in every subject.

The answer describes examples in general but avoids the local-versus-wider decision. “Choose the ones that work best” repeats the goal without providing a criterion. State a position and explain when familiarity or variety is useful.

10. Discussion: information on campus noticeboards

| STRONGER RESPONSE. Professor: Should a college replace printed noticeboards with a single online information page? Sara: Yes; one page is easier to update and reduces outdated notices. Ben: No; students notice boards while walking past, even when they are not searching online. Contribute a supported position and respond to a classmate.

I would use one online page as the complete information source while keeping brief printed notices for important events. Sara is right that maintaining one detailed page can make updates easier. A changed room or booking deadline should not remain buried in several conflicting versions. However, Ben identifies a different purpose for physical boards: they help people discover activities they were not already looking for. A student walking to class might see a short workshop announcement and then open the online page for current details. The printed notice should therefore carry a clear title, date and a readable route to the online information, with old notices removed promptly. This approach keeps the value of discovery while reducing the amount of detailed material that staff must update in several places.

The position connects update consistency with discovery, using a concrete workshop example and a workable division of roles. It treats Ben’s argument as a different function to preserve rather than an outdated preference.

| WEAKER RESPONSE FOR DIAGNOSIS. Same task.

I agree with Sara that an online page is the best solution. Colleges should use modern technology because technology is becoming more common every year. Students already use phones and computers for many tasks, so they will enjoy receiving information in the same way. An online page can contain a lot of information and look attractive. It could use different colours and pictures to make students interested. Staff members could also add new activities whenever they want. These features would make the college appear organised and modern to visitors. Ben has mentioned noticeboards, but they are old-fashioned. We should focus on the future instead of keeping things from the past. Online information is modern, so it must be more effective than printed information.

The response equates being modern with being effective. It does not address discovery by people who were not searching online. Attractive colours and institutional image do not establish that replacing boards serves that need.