

Email Etiquette

1. **Be informal, not sloppy.** Your colleagues may use commonly accepted abbreviations in email, but when communicating with external customers, everyone should follow standard writing protocol. Your email message reflects you and your company, so traditional spelling, grammar, and punctuation rules apply. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points use numbers or bullets.
2. **Keep messages brief and to the point.** Just because your writing is grammatically correct does not mean that it has to be long. Nothing is more frustrating than wading through an email message that is twice as long as necessary. Concentrate on one subject per message whenever possible.
3. **Use sentence case.** USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE SHOUTING. Using all lowercase letters looks lazy. For emphasis, use asterisks or bold formatting to emphasize important words. Do not, however, use a lot of colors or graphics embedded in your message, because not everyone uses an email program that can display them.
4. **Use the blind copy and courtesy copy appropriately.** Don't use BCC to keep others from seeing who you copied; it shows confidence when you directly CC anyone receiving a copy. Do use BCC, however, when sending to a large distribution list, so recipients won't have to see a huge list of names. Be cautious with your use of CC; overuse simply clutters inboxes. Copy only people who are directly involved.
5. **Don't use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact.** Don't forget the value of face-to-face or even voice-to-voice communication. Email communication isn't appropriate when sending confusing or emotional messages.
6. **Remember that email isn't private.** Email is considered company property and can be retrieved, examined, and used in a court of law. Unless you are using an encryption device (hardware or software), you should assume that email over the Internet is not secure. Never put in an email message anything that you wouldn't put on a postcard. Remember that email can be forwarded, so unintended audiences may see what you've written. You might also inadvertently send something to the wrong party, so always keep the content professional to avoid embarrassment.
7. **Use the subject field to indicate content and purpose.** Don't just say, "Hi!" or "From Laura." Agree on acronyms to use that quickly identify actions. For example, your team could use <AR> to mean "Action Required" or <MSR> for the Monthly Status Report. It's also a good practice to include the word "Long" in the subject field, if necessary, so that the recipient knows that the message will take time to read.
8. **Be careful using reply to all.** Unless you are communicating with a specific group for a business need, don't reply to all especially if documents are attached. An email sent to you could have hundreds of other recipients. If many of those reply to all, it can saturate the network and greatly slow email delivery.
9. **Remember that your tone can't be heard in e-mail.** Email communication can't convey the nuances of verbal communication. In an attempt to infer tone of voice, some people use emoticons, but use them sparingly so that you don't appear unprofessional. Also, don't assume that using a smiley will diffuse a difficult message.
10. **Use a signature that includes contact information.** To ensure that people know who you are, include a signature that has your contact information, including your mailing address, and phone number.
11. **Answer promptly.** Each email should be replied to as quickly as possible and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, just send an email back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them.

12. **Do not overuse the high priority option.** If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message will come across as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.
13. **Don't leave out the message thread.** When you reply to an email, include the original mail in your reply. In other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. Some people say that you must remove the previous message since this has already been sent and is therefore unnecessary. If you receive many emails you obviously cannot remember each individual email. This means that a 'threadless email' will not provide enough information and you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the email in order to deal with it. Leaving the thread will save the recipient time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their Inbox.
14. **Add disclaimers to internal and external mails.** This can help protect your Agency from liability.
15. **Read the email before you send it.** A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

The Author of most of this document is Laura Stack, MBA, CSP, The Productivity Pro®

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/12-tips-for-better-e-mail-etiquette-HA001205410.aspx>