



Graduate Online Writing Studio

Professional Email Etiquette

Although many perceive emails as informal communication, emailing in a professional or academic environment requires writers to observe professional communication etiquette to ensure that their message is perceived in the right way. Writers should always be polite and professional when emailing classmates, instructors, or administrators at school as well as colleagues or management at work. The following tips can help you to maintain professional communication etiquette when writing and sending important emails.

- **Use a clear and concise subject line.**

Your first impression when it comes to email is your subject line, and as such, you should always include a subject line with any academic or professional email, and that subject line should be short, clear, direct, and concise and should introduce your email's overall content and/or purpose (e.g., "Question about assignment," "Meeting time has been changed," "Extension request," "Interview follow-up," etc.). Using a clear subject line will ensure that your recipient knows what the email contains and why they should open and reply to it.

- **Make sure your email looks and sounds professional.**

You should always maintain professionalism when writing an email. Rather than jumping right into the content of your email or starting your email with something informal like "Hey," start the email with a professional salutation. Here are a few examples of appropriate professional salutations:

- Dear (name of recipient),
- Hello, (name of recipient),
- Greetings,
- Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening,

You also want to end the email with a professional closing like the following:

- Sincerely,
- Best,
- Respectfully,
- Thank you,

Since your reader cannot perceive your vocal or facial cues, when writing the body of your email, be sure that the tone overall is professional and polite. Avoid using humor or wording which readers could take the wrong way or misunderstood. Visually, your email should also convey a professional tone by avoiding the overuse of emojis or exclamation points and using standard fonts (Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, Georgia) and colors (black).

- **Include any information the recipient needs to contact you.**

Often in professional or academic settings, you have to email people you may not know well or at all. Even instructors you think may know you may have many students and may not know all their names or what class each student is in at a glance. In cases like these, it is important to provide your recipient with enough information to know who you are and how to contact you. Be sure to introduce yourself in the beginning of the email to let the recipient know who you are. Then provide the contact information you want them to use to respond to you (i.e., email address, phone number).

- **Keep your emails concise.**
 In professional and academic emails, you want to be as straightforward and clear as possible. Provide only necessary information in your emails. If you do need to write a lengthier email, break the email information up into short paragraphs that concisely present the main ideas of your message.
- **Respond to emails promptly.**
 When you receive professional or academic emails that require a reply, be sure to reply to the email in a timely manner. Being punctual in your email replies helps maintain consistent communication and shows the person you are emailing that you respect them and value their time. Even if you receive an email meant for someone else in error, reply to the sender to let them know promptly in case the email content is time sensitive.
- **Assume others will read your email.**
 Nothing online is truly private, including email. If you are sending an email on a school or work email address, you should always assume that someone else in the organization can and will read your email. As stated earlier, it is always important to maintain a professional tone, but you should also avoid spreading gossip or sharing inappropriate information in professional or work emails.
- **Proofread your emails.**
 As with any piece of writing, effective communication is the goal of every email. You should always proofread your emails to ensure that your message is getting across and that there are no errors in your writing. Leaving typos and grammatical errors in your emails can reflect poorly on you as a professional or a student because it implies that either you cannot write well or did not take the time to edit your work before sending. To ensure that your emails say what you want them to say about the message and about you, it is always a good idea to use a spell checker and read through the completed email at least once before hitting send. See the Writing Studio's resources on [Proofreading Strategies](#) for more proofreading tips.
- **Be careful with "Reply All."**
 Emails in professional and academic contexts often have multiple recipients (i.e., entire classes, all employees in an organization, several members of a department, etc.). Hitting "Reply" allows you to respond only to the direct sender of the email while hitting "Reply All" will send your response to the sender as well as all other recipients of the original email. You should use "Reply All" sparingly and only when the information is necessary for everyone to know. For instance, if you receive an email about a project that someone sent to all members of the project group/team, then the information you are sending back will likely apply to all members of the group, so "Reply All" might be appropriate. However, if you receive an email sent to all employees in your company announcing the employee of the month, sending congratulations to just that one employee would be a better choice than sending that congratulations email to all your coworkers.
- **Don't forget to attach necessary files.**
 It is always embarrassing to have to send a second email because you forgot to attach a document to the first one. Be sure to always double check that you attached any necessary documents or files before sending a professional or academic email to avoid that embarrassing second reply.
- **Add the email address last.**
 When sending an email, you want to ensure that everything looks and sounds right before sending, but if you place the email address in the "To" line of the email before writing it, you run the risk of accidentally hitting send before the email is ready. To ensure you do not accidentally send an incomplete

message to a professional or academic contact, make typing in the email address the last step you take before hitting send.