

# Email Etiquette

## More Than Just Manners



We all understand the importance of good “people skills” when it comes to our interpersonal communication – it helps us get the results we need. Our communication determines the opinion others have of us – knowledgeable or ignorant, pleasant or rude, professional or immature.

When it comes to email etiquette, it’s not as easy to control how others perceive us, and yet it’s even more important. Why?

**Because what you write and how you use email can affect whether your email gets delivered, read, or responded to – and what that response is!**



### Think, write, and think again.

Email is a static, one-way channel – unlike live communication, there’s no way to get immediate feedback (from facial expressions or voice responses) to know if we are being effective or even understood. So think twice before hitting the send key.

### Use a meaningful subject line.

This is the first thing your reader sees. Use a subject that relates to the message you’re sending. Without a subject line your note will probably be seen as another piece of junk mail. Avoid generic words like “Hi” or “Check This Out”.

### The beginning, and the end.

Always use a salutation, even if it’s short, like “Hi”, or “Hello”, or “Dear”, whatever works best for the intended recipient. Don’t forget the end of your message too! Always sign your messages with your name, and say “Thank You”, or “Sincerely” or the like.

### Protect your recipients identity.

If your email is being sent to just one person, use the “To:” field. When your email is being sent to more than one person, use the “CC:” field. For email sent to multiple recipients when they don’t need to know who else you sent to, use the “BCC:” field.

### Give memory a helping hand.

When replying to emails, include a copy of the prior emails you’ve traded with the person on the topic, don’t just send a new message. It’s not always possible to remember every single ‘conversation’ you have had with every single person.

### Use the ‘Read Receipt’ sparingly.

In normal day-to-day activities you should not request a read receipt for every message you send. Not only is it annoying to the recipient, but don’t forget – just because they have received it doesn’t mean they have actually even read it.

### **URGENT! The boy who cried wolf.**

Do not send all your messages as URGENT, or HIGH PRIORITY. If your recipients keep receiving messages marked that way, then eventually the red exclamation point loses its effectiveness – except to reinforce how important YOU think you are.

### **Avoid Special Coding or Formatting**

Don't use colored email backgrounds, colored fonts, special fonts, images or other "pretty" type of formatting to your messages. Keep them clean – this makes it easier for the intended recipient to read them and reply. They will also load faster!

### **Don't SHOUT at your recipient.**

Typing in all caps is seen as yelling, or that you were just too lazy to use proper text formatting. It's also hard on the eyes – it takes longer to read something written in all caps than it does to read something that is properly formatted.

### **Proof, spell-check, and proper formatting.**

Poor writing skills are a direct reflection on you! Spell checking will prevent most misspelled words, but you should always proof your email in case you've written the incorrect word. Use proper capitalization, punctuation and formatting.

### **Take the time to send a reply.**

When someone emails you something that doesn't need a direct response, follow up with them in a timely manner just to let them know you received it. It's amazing how often people will ask for advice, and not even reply with a short "Thank you".

### **If they didn't request it, don't send it!**

You cannot email someone about your product/service without their permission. Unless they request that you send them an email, or you have previously done business with them, then it is illegal to send them an email, period. (Can-Spam Act)

### **Compress, Compress, Compress!**

If you are sending an email with several large attachments, it is often better to send them in a few separate emails, so that you don't send a document that is too large to even open. Or, you can try compressing your messages into a zipped file.

### **Hoaxes as helpful hints.**

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Do not forward everything that gets sent to you. If you receive one from a friend, reply to them (in a very nice way) and explain to them why this isn't true, or ask them to stop forwarding them to you.

### **Virus, or virus advice?**

Many viruses are spread by email masquerading as warnings about – a virus! If you get a virus warning, which usually contains instructions for removing a virus... check google.com for that virus BEFORE doing anything. It's likely a hoax.