

Email Etiquette

Online communication is fast, simple, and growing rapidly. An awareness of the basics of online etiquette can help prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Here are some "rules" to follow to become a polite email user:

Do

1. Stick to the subject line - Be specific in your subject line. The use of a subject line can be the trigger to having your email read or not.
2. Use blind carbon copy (BCC) when sending a mass emailing - By using BCC only the recipient's email address is visible reading the email. ******
3. Greetings and salutations - In most instances use the recipient's first name. Otherwise, address them the same way you address them in person. When sending to a group, "Greetings" will do.
4. Keep it conversational - Strive for a professional but conversational tone.
5. Good grammar is good - Even though it's a quick email, remember to use good grammar. You don't want to come across as uneducated.
6. Use discretion in what you send - Jokes, cute stories, inspirational messages, and poems are the equivalent of online junk mail. If you must send them, remove header information (e.g. all the addresses the message has already been sent to...)
7. Avoid sending unsolicited attachments - If a recipient hasn't requested it, don't send it. Long attachments can tie up a person's email system and is usually not appreciated.
8. Proofread your emails before sending - Read through your message before clicking send to make sure it is clear and concise.
9. Sign every email you send. If you're corresponding with someone who may need to contact you, also include your phone number.
10. Keep private communications private - If your message is private and you want to keep it that way, don't email it. You would be better off using the phone or meeting face to face.

Don't

1. Don't send long emails. Be concise and to the point. Double space between paragraphs and don't indent. This makes your email easier to read.
2. Don't use caps - Typing your message in all caps is the equivalent of shouting and can anger the recipient.
3. Don't over-punctuate - Use punctuation the way it's supposed to be used, not to add emphasis.
4. Don't use too many "Smilies" - The general rule is no more than two or three emoticons ("Smilies") per message. :)
5. Don't spam (send unsolicited email to large groups of people).
6. Don't open unsolicited email attachments - A virus could be lurking within the attachment. Only open it if it's from someone you know.
7. Don't compose a new message when replying to a message. Use the 'Reply' button instead so you don't break the message thread. Also, do not delete the original message text, put your reply text at the beginning of your message.
8. Don't overreact and avoid knee-jerk reactions - If you're angry or upset it's best to wait a bit before replying. Once you hit the send button it can't be taken back.
9. Don't use emails for time-sensitive communications - Think of email as a message that doesn't require an immediate reply.
10. Don't use 'Reply All' when replying to only the person sending the message.

****** Using email to communicate with a group of people:

1. ALWAYS use bcc when you email to protect privacy.
2. Identify your organization in the Subject section of the email.
3. To allow for easier email reading, include a "bare bones" plain text version of the important information in the email body (who, what, when, where, why). Do not use backgrounds or fancy fonts – they will cause problems for some email users.
4. Encourage people to forward (email) the information on to others.
5. Attached a printable flier or provide a link to your web site where one can be found. Do not send large attachments. Only use standard formats (not everyone uses the same word processor, use PDF since the Acrobat viewer is free) or include an image using gif or jpg.