



E-mail Etiquette for Business

E-mail is wonderful, it is less intrusive than a phone call in somebody's busy day and it is faster than a letter.

Remember however that this may be the first time you are contacting a person you do not know. You therefore need to make a good impression. So consider the following list of tips before you hit the send button.

DO'S

- Check and respond to your emails regularly, preferably daily.
- Use an automatic out of the office message when you are out of the office more than two days.
- Check the correct address is in the 'To' field as it can be accidentally sent to the wrong person in your address book with a similar name.
- Is your e-mail address professional or is it cute or wacky? If you are running a business check you have a professional email address.
- Put in any meaningful title in the subject field. Something that summarises the message.
- Start with an appropriate greeting. Such as the form of address you would use in verbal communication with the person. Finish with an appropriate signature. The signature should be no longer than 5 or 6 lines. Include your name, title, company name and if you wish your contact numbers and website address, but not your street address.
- Keep emails brief and to the point.
- Use bullet points to make an e-mail easier to read.
- Only cover one subject per e-mail. Use a new e-mail for a new subject.
- Only use plain text in e-mails, not fancy formatting of text with unusual fonts or colours.
- When forwarding an e-mail check the history below and remove anything you do not want to forward.
- Always be polite, professional and careful what you say about others.
- Use a good structure and layout in your email. Keep paragraphs short, with blank lines between. Put your most important points first.
- Emoticons - such as smiley faces made up of colons. Use only if you have a friendship with the receiver. Avoid graphics that jump around on the screen.

- If in doubt end an e-mail just with ' Thanks'
- Read your e-mail and check for tone (does your e-mail read friendly and respectful), punctuation, grammar and spelling before sending.
- The 'To' field is for people you are directly addressing. The 'Cc' field for those people you just want to keep informed, but do not expect a reply from them. The 'Bcc' field is the blind carbon copy and those listed in the 'To' and ' Cc' fields do not know that you have sent a copy to those in 'Bcc' field. Always use the 'Bcc' field sparingly, because it can be considered unethical. However if you are sending an e-mail to a group always put their e-mail addresses in the 'Bcc' field and address the e-mail to yourself in the 'To' field. That way you have not disclosed everybody's e-mail address to the whole group.
- Use the reply button to keep the thread of previous discussions, if it is going to make it easier for the person to understand your email.
- Before sending on jokes, check with the receiver whether they wish to be included in your group for funny e-mails. Personally I like funny photos (if they are not large) but never read long text jokes. Check with your friends and group them accordingly.
- Always cut-and-paste in to a new e-mail if you want to forward a funny joke to a friend. Do not just forward, as it is one way spammers can collect e-mail addresses.
- Ask before you send large attachments such as photographs over 1 MB. Try and avoid sending any attachment greater than 1 MB for dial up users or 5 MB for broadband users, even if you have permission.
- Add a disclaimer to all your e-mails, but keep it brief.
- Allow time for a reply, not everyone sits at their computer all day.
- If you receive an e-mail incorrectly addressed to you, notified the sender.
- Only use the high priority option as an exception.
- Save a tree by not printing e-mails, unless necessary for future reference. Instead create folders and save your e-mails into them.

DON'TS

- Never reply when you are angry.
- Do not use irony (words that mean the opposite of what is said) or sarcasm in e-mails.
- Do not write in capitals, this means you are shouting. Use bold instead.
- Do not redirect e-mails without the original sender's permission and do not forward on the original sender's e-mail address to others.
- Do not use abbreviations unless they are very well known such as 'FYI'.
- Do not attach unnecessary files.
- Do not forward chain letters.
- Do not request delivery and read receipts.
- Avoid using urgent and important in the subject line unless necessary.
- Do not use abbreviations as used in mobile text messages.
- A verbal attack in electronic form is known as 'Flaming'. It is usually due to the misinterpretation of the content of the e-mail sent. If you respond you can end up in a 'flame war' so think very carefully before responding. It may be better just to delete the e-mail and move on.

REMEMBER

- Your manners – use please, thank you, a greeting at the beginning and the end of your emails.
- Email is a permanent record and can be used against you.
- Email is not confidential, **ever** !
- All laws of copyright, defamation, discrimination etc apply to e-mail.
- Some large organisations have e-mail filters that pick up combinations of words and letters that are classed as 'inappropriate language' and therefore the e-mail will not be delivered and will be bounced back to the sender.
- If sending jokes to an office e-mail people can be terminated for sending, receiving or storing inappropriate material. Jokes should only be sent to personal e-mail addresses and chain e-mail should never be forwarded.

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