

How to Write Professional Emails

Effective Communication for the Workplace (Written Communication)

There is a big difference between email and texts used for business communication (work, teachers) and email and texts for communicating with friends and family. When you send a message to a buddy or relative, you can be pretty casual. You can use slang if you want. In other words, you can write as if you were speaking to that person.

Business correspondence dictates that you conduct yourself with professionalism. When you are too casual, use slang or inappropriate language, or send error-filled messages, it leaves a bad impression on the recipients of your message. Here are some basic rules of email etiquette.

Mind Your Manners

Use the words "please" and "thank you." Your recipient will appreciate your politeness.

Address people you don't know, or only have a formal relationship with, by their title and last name. For example, use Mr., Ms. or Dr. unless they invite you to use their first name. For a hint about how someone with whom you already have an established relationship prefers to be addressed, look at how he signs his messages before you decide whether it's alright to use his first name.

Watch Your Tone

Tone is a writer's way of expressing his or her attitude. Make sure you come across as respectful, friendly and approachable. You don't want to sound curt or demanding.

If you're writing to someone with whom you've communicated before, begin with something friendly like "I hope you are well." For official email, for example, when you're writing to a prospective employer, stick to words only and do not use emojis or emoticons.

It is always considered poor email etiquette to use all upper case letters. It looks like you are shouting. Do not use all lower case letters either, it is an inappropriate use of the English language.

Be Concise but Clear

Everyone's time is valuable, and you should respect that. Your recipient may have just a moment to read your email and respond to it. Use a clear subject line so the recipient knows why you are writing. When composing your message, be as brief as possible while still making sure to include all pertinent information and details.

Always think of how your readers will read your message and write accordingly.

1. State the purpose of the message.

2. Focus on a single purpose for each message.
3. Include information readers not only want, but may also need.
4. Provide the most important information in the first paragraph.

Avoid Using Texting Abbreviations

Due to phone texting, we have gotten accustomed to using abbreviations. For example, we use U instead of you, UR instead of your, 2 instead of to or too, plz instead of please, and thx instead of thanks. That's fine if your recipient is a friend. Business email should be more formal. Of course, commonly used abbreviations such as Mr. and Mrs., FYI (for your information), inc. and etc. are fine.

Use a Professional Email Address

Always use the email address your employer assigned to you for work-related correspondence and do not use it for anything else. If you are job hunting, use a personal email account, but make sure your address looks professional. Are you a chickybabe@isp.com or hotdude@isp.com? Maybe, but do you want a prospective employer to think so? Consider getting an address that uses your first initial and last name or your full name. Consider adding a second email for professional use only. If your Internet Service Provider only provides a single address, look into getting a free account (i.e. gmail, yahoo).

Remember that Spelling and Grammar Count- Be error free

Always proofread your email carefully. You want to pay attention to correct spelling and proper grammar. Use an automatic spell checker if you wish but be careful about relying on it too heavily. If you are using the wrong spelling for a particular use of a word, for example, two vs. to vs. too, it won't pick up your mistake. Don't try to guess the spelling of a word. You should look it up in a free online dictionary. Grammarly.com has free tools, including an extension for the Chrome browser that can help you. Never use slang or any offensive language.

Are the name and email address in the "To" field correct? Watch out for Reply to All.

When you begin typing a recipient's name into the "To" field, most email clients will fill in the rest of the name. Be sure to check that it is correct. Imagine the embarrassment if you are looking for a job while you are still employed and a hiring manager at a prospective employer has a name that begins with the same letter as your current boss's name. You want to make sure your message reaches its intended destination ... and that it doesn't reach an unintended one. Consider putting the addresses in last so you do not send before you are ready!

Have I included unsolicited attachments?

Before you send an attachment, make sure you get your recipient's permission. For example, if you want someone to look at your resume, don't send it as an attachment unless you ask first or have been instructed to do so.