



Writing a Professional Email

When contacting anyone via email, it is vital that you present yourself in a professional manner. People can learn a lot about a person based on the content and presentation of the written word – it is how they gauge what type of person you are and how you carry yourself in a professional setting.

Writing exceptional subject lines

A subject line is your first impression, so make it great! A well-written subject line should attempt to follow these guidelines:

- Keep it brief: Address the reason for your email in a short, description manner.
- Be specific: Readers want to know exactly what they're getting into. Cut to the chase so they're more likely to give your email a chance.
- Make it eye-catching: Use catchy phrases so it stands out in the inbox
- Include a call-to-action: Give them a reason to open your email. How will reading it benefit them?
- Take the pressure off: Make it sound important, but don't emphasize urgency as it may ward off interest.

Proper salutation and closing phrase

At this point, your letter-writing skills from sixth grade are extremely relevant. It is important to keep your salutation professional.

- Begin with "Dear..." followed by the correct professional title: Mr. or Mrs., Professor, Dr., etc.
- If you do not know the name of the person you need to contact, begin with "To Whom It May Concern,"
- The complementary close should appear two lines below the last line of the email's body. There are a variety of professional options, including Sincerely or Best wishes.

How to structure email messages

Email content should be written similarly to writing a letter or a school paper:

- Follow paragraph form in the body of the letter. However, you don't need to include an introduction and conclusion paragraph unless your email has a lot of information to include.
 - In general, emails should be kept as short as possible due to the large influx of emails the average person receives each day.
- Be sure to use complete sentences and proper punctuation at all times.
- Never use slang terms such as "hey" or "like."
- Use a professional tone as opposed a relaxed tone you may use with your friends. Write your emails as if you are talking to your boss or a potential employer.

Use of Cc and Bcc

Cc = carbon copy

- Used to copy viewers on an email. You can use this option when you need to send an email to someone but you want other people to see it as well. You can also use it as a means to send the same email to multiple people (as opposed to including all emails in the *To* field).

Bcc = blind carbon copy

- Used to include others on an email conversation without informing the main recipient or anyone in the *Cc* field of the others' email addresses. It can also be used for maximum anonymity by placing your own email in the *To* field and all recipients in the *Bcc* field.

Email signatures and best font choices

For more details and tips on proper email signatures, go to the “Dress Up Your Email Signature” document on our Professional Development page.

- Keep it organized:
 - Practice the same organization techniques when grouping information together, such as titles of positions.
 - Use the same font *type* throughout the signature as well as in the body of your email. Spice it up with bold or italics where fitting.
 - Font *size* should be the same with the exception of your name, which you may choose to make a few sizes bigger.
- Keep it professional: only include information related to school, work, contact information, and other relevant professional information such as personal websites.

General email etiquette

Be polite in your emails. People respond more positively to kind words.

Do not let negative emotions affect what you write. Act in email conversations as you would in real life.

Activity

Practice writing a professional email about any topic you wish. Perhaps write something you have to or will have to do often, such as informing a coworker about a project you've been working on, reminding your student organization about an upcoming meeting, or requesting information about a research project from your professor.

Next, ask someone you trust to look over it: the professional development coordinator; your advisor or supervisor; or, the leader of your student organization for example. What are some items on which you did well? Upon which items and skills could you improve?