Email Writing

Although email is a valuable tool, it is also a unique genre of writing that can create some challenges writers. Email can be used to: contact friends, communicate with professors or bosses, ask questions, and apply for jobs, internships, and scholarships amongst many other uses. Your email should consider purpose, style, delivery, and audience. This handout is designed to help you navigate the different kinds of emails you might send and the elements that compose them in order to most effectively achieve your purposes.

Do Send Email When:
- The person cannot be reached by phone
- The person is not located in the same part of the country/world
- The information you need or want to share is not time-sensitive
- You need to send an electronic file
- You need to share information with a large group quickly
- You need a written record of your communication

Do Not Send an Email When:
- Your message is long, complicated, and/or requires discussion
- Your information is private
- The information is emotional or your tone could be misunderstood

Components of an Email

Subject Line

A subject line should be like the headline of a newspaper. A subject line should tell your reader the purpose of your email in a concise manner but should be more than one word. "Hi" or "FYI" don't tell the recipient anything about your email, but **"Question about Class Thursday"** or **"Need help understanding the homework"** tell your reader the purpose of your message.

Greetings

Don't start off the body of your email without first greeting the recipient. If you are not sure about how to greet your recipient, it is usually best to address them more formally in order to avoid offending them. Common greeting examples include: **"Dear Professor Johnson,"** or **"Hello Mr. Smith,"**. If you are unsure whom you are addressing such as in a case where you are addressing several people with one message try something like: **"Dear Selection Committee,"** or **"Hello everyone,"**.

Sign-off

The closing or sign-off to your email lets the recipient know who you are. Always sign off with your name such as: **"Thank You,** or **"Sincerely,** Be sure to consider the level of formality you audience will expect when signing off.
 John Smith"   **Mary Jane"**

This page was adapted from The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Carbon Copy and Blind Carbon Copy

Carbon copy (Cc)

Carbon Copying individuals on an email sends your message to the recipient while also sending someone else a copy. This can convey the same exact message to more than one person. In professional settings, copying someone else on an email can help get things done, especially if the person receiving the copy is in a supervisory role. For example, copying your boss on an email to a non-responsive co-worker might prompt the co-worker to respond. Be aware, however, that when you send a message to more than one address using Cc:, both the original recipient and all the recipients of the carbon copies can see each person who receives it.

Blind Carbon Copy (Bcc)

Blind copying emails to a group of people can be useful when you don't want everyone on the list to have each other's addresses. If you don't want any of the recipients to see the email addresses in the list, you can put your own address under To: and use Bcc: exclusively to address your message to others. However, do not assume that blind copying will always keep recipients from knowing who else was copied—someone who is blind copied may hit "reply all" and send a reply to everyone, revealing that they were included in the original message.

5 Tips To Help Get Responses to your Emails

1. Briefly state your purpose for writing in the very beginning of your message.

2. Be sure to provide the reader with some context. If you're asking a question, cut and paste any relevant text into the email so that the reader has some frame of reference for your question. When replying to someone else's email, it can often be helpful to either include or restate the sender's message.

3. Use paragraphs to separate thoughts (or consider writing separate emails if you have many unrelated points or questions).

4. State the desired outcome at the end of your message. If you're requesting a response, let the reader know what type of response you require.

5. If you're requesting something that has a due date, be sure to highlight that due date in a prominent position in your message. Ending your email with the next step can be really useful, especially in work settings (for example, you might write "I will follow this up with a phone call to you in the next day or so" or "Let's plan to further discuss this at the meeting on Wednesday").

Questions to Ask Before You Hit Send

• What is my purpose for sending this email? Will the message seem important to the receiver?

• How much email does the reader usually receive, and what will make them read this message (or delete it)?

• Do the formality and style of my writing match the expectations of my audience?

• Did I identify myself and make it easy for the reader to respond in an appropriate manner?

• Will the receiver be able to open and read any attachments?

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