

Email Etiquette 101

1. **Be professional, not sloppy.** When communicating with external customers, everyone should follow standard writing protocol. Your email message reflects you and your company, so traditional spelling, grammar, and punctuation rules apply.
2. **Keep messages brief and to the point.** Just because you are writing is grammatically correct does not mean that it has to be long. Nothing is more frustrating than wading through an email message that is twice as long as necessary. Concentrate on one subject per message whenever possible.
3. **Use sentence case.** USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOOKS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. Using all lowercase letters looks lazy. For emphasis, use asterisks or bold formatting to emphasize important words. Do not, however, use a lot of colors or graphics embedded in your message, because not everyone uses an email program that can display them.
4. **Do not use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact.** Do not forget the value of face-to-face or even voice-to-voice communication. Email communication is not appropriate when sending confusing or emotional messages. Think of the times you have heard someone in the office indignantly say, "Well, I *sent* you an email." If you have a problem with someone, speak with that person directly. Do not use email to avoid an uncomfortable situation or to cover up a mistake.
5. **Remember that email is not private.** I have seen people fired for using email inappropriately. Email is considered company property and can be retrieved, examined, and used in a court of law. Unless you are using an encryption device (hardware or software), you should assume that email over the Internet is not secure. Never put in an email message anything that you would not put on a postcard. Remember that email can be forwarded, so unintended audiences may see what you have written. You might also inadvertently send something to the wrong party, so always keep the content professional to avoid embarrassment.
6. **Be sparing with group email.** Send group email only when it is useful to every recipient. Use the "reply all" button only when compiling results requiring collective input and only if you have something to add. Recipients get quite annoyed to open an email that says only "Me too!" When sending emails to a group use the blind copy for their email addresses. Not everyone wants everyone to have their email. Also, start the email with: Dear Colleague.
7. **Use the subject field to indicate content and purpose.** Make sure the subject identifies within the first sentence of the email the content and the purpose of the email.
8. **Remember that your tone can be heard in email.** Sarcasm can be heard in an email. Remember who you are writing to and email is a record that can be used as supporting documentation.

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9. **Use a signature that includes contact information.** To ensure that people know who you are, include a signature that has your contact information, including your mailing address, company web site, and phone and fax numbers.
10. **Summarize long discussions.** Instead of continuing to forward a message string, take a minute to summarize it for your reader. When responding to the long message make sure you highlight what you are responding too. You could even highlight or quote the relevant passage, then include your response. ***Some words of caution:*** If you are forwarding or reposting a message you have received, do not change the wording.
11. **Do not write an email like it is a text message.** When writing an email; it is not a text message. Cut up words should not be used; use complete sentences, proper grammar, and no emoticons.