

# E-MAIL ETIQUETTE RULES EVERY PROFESSIONAL SHOULD KNOW

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## 1. Include a clear, direct subject line

Examples of a good subject line include "Meeting date changed," "Quick question about your presentation," or "Suggestions for the proposal."

People often decide whether to open an email based on the subject line. Choose one that lets readers know you are addressing their concerns or business issues.

## 2. Use a professional email address

If you work for a company, you should use your company email address. But if you use a personal email account, whether you are self-employed or just like using it occasionally for work-related correspondences, you should be careful when choosing the address.

You should always have an email address that conveys your name so that the recipient knows exactly who is sending the email. Never use email addresses that are not appropriate for use in the workplace, such as "babygirl@..." or [beerlover@...!](#)

## 3. Think twice before hitting 'reply all'

No one wants to read emails from 20 people that have nothing to do with them. Ignoring the emails can be difficult, with many people getting notifications of new messages on their smartphones or distracting pop-up messages on their computer screens. Refrain from hitting "reply all" unless you really think everyone on the list needs to receive the email.

## 4. Include a signature

Provide your reader with some information about you. Generally, this would state your full name, title, the company name, and your contact information, including a phone number. You also can add a little publicity for yourself, but don't go overboard with any sayings or artwork. Use the same font, type size, and colour as the rest of the email.

## 5. Use professional salutations

Don't use laid-back, colloquial expressions like, "Hey you guys," "Yo," or "Hi folks."

The relaxed nature of our writing should not affect the salutation in an email. "Hey" is a very informal salutation and generally it should not be used in the workplace. And "Howzit" is not okay either. Use "Hi" or "Hello" instead.

Do not shorten anyone's name. Say "Hi Michael," unless you're certain he prefers to be called "Mike."

## 6. Use exclamation points sparingly

If you choose to use an exclamation mark, use only one to convey excitement.

People sometimes get carried away and put a number of exclamation points at the end of their sentences. The result can appear too emotional or immature.

### **7. Be cautious with humour**

Humour can easily get lost in translation without the right tone or facial expressions. In a professional exchange, it's better to leave humour out of emails unless you know the recipient well. Also, something that you think is funny might not be funny to someone else. Something perceived as funny when spoken may come across very differently when written. When in doubt, leave it out.

### **8. Know that people from different cultures speak and write differently**

Miscommunication can easily occur because of cultural differences, especially in the writing form when we can't see one another's body language. Tailor your message to the receiver's cultural background or how well you know them.

A good rule to keep in mind is that high-context cultures (Japanese, Arab, or Chinese) want to get to know you before doing business with you. Therefore, it may be common for business associates from these countries to be more personal in their writings. On the other hand, people from low-context cultures (German, American, or Scandinavian) prefer to get to the point very quickly.

### **9. Reply to your emails, even if the email wasn't intended for you**

It's difficult to reply to every email message ever sent to you, but you should try to. This includes when the email was accidentally sent to you, especially if the sender is expecting a reply. A reply isn't necessary but serves as good e-mail etiquette, especially if this person works in the same company or industry as you.

Here's an example reply: "I know you're very busy, but I don't think you meant to send this e-mail to me, so you can send it to the correct person."

### **10. Proofread every message**

Your mistakes won't go unnoticed by the recipients of your email. Depending upon the recipient, you may be judged for making them.

Don't rely on spell-check. Read and reread your e-mail a few times, preferably aloud, before sending it off.

One supervisor intended to write 'Sorry for the inconvenience,' but he relied on his spell-check and ended up writing 'Sorry for the incontinence.'

### **11. Add the email address last.**

You don't want to send an email accidentally before you have finished writing and proofing the message. Even when you are replying to a message, it's a good precaution to delete the recipient's address and insert it only when you are sure the message is ready to be sent.

### **12. Double-check that you've selected the correct recipient**

Pay careful attention when typing a name from your address book on the e-mail's "To" line. It's easy to select the wrong name, which can be embarrassing to you and to the person who receives the email by mistake.

### **13. Keep your fonts classic**

Purple Comic Sans has a time and a place (maybe?) but for business correspondence, keep your fonts, colours, and sizes classic.

The cardinal rule: Your e-mails should be easy for other people to read.

Generally, it is best to use 10-12-point type and an easy-to-read font such as Arial, Calibri, or Tahoma. As for colour, black is the safest choice.

### **14. Keep tabs on your tone**

Just as jokes get lost in translation, tone is easy to misconstrue without the context you'd get from vocal cues and facial expressions. Accordingly, it's easy to come off as more abrupt than you might have intended. You meant "straightforward"; they read "angry and curt."

To avoid misunderstandings, read your message out loud before hitting send. If it sounds harsh to you, it will sound harsh to the reader.

For best results, avoid using unequivocally negative words ("failure," "wrong," or "neglected"), and always say "please" and "thank you."

### **15. Nothing is confidential; so write accordingly**

Always remember what former CIA Director David Petraeus apparently forgot: Every electronic message leaves a trail.

A basic guideline is to assume that others will see what you write, so don't write anything you wouldn't want everyone to see. A more liberal interpretation: Don't write anything that would be ruinous to you or hurtful to others. After all, e-mail is dangerously easy to forward, and it's better to be safe than sorry.

*Business Insider*

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/email-etiquette-rules-every-professional-needs-to-know-2016>