



### 14 TIPS FOR E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

When communicating with people other than friends, it is expected that you use the writing skills you learned in your English classes.

#### 1. Do not write in all capital letters

Writing in all cap's makes it seem like you are shouting, and some readers find it more difficult to read. This is RUDE. If you want to stress a point, opt for underlining or putting it in bold font. On the other hand, DO capitalize when traditionally required such as capitalizing "I" and NOT using lowercase "i".

#### 2. Avoid abbreviations and emoticons

Using abbreviations like "FYI" (i.e. For Your Information), or an emoticon (e.g. "☺"), or "ur" for "you are" may be okay in an e-mail to a friend, but they are inappropriate in formal e-mail messages. You would not include smiley faces in an important letter, so do not put them in professional e-mail messages.

#### 3. Always fill the subject line

Your e-mail's subject line is the first impression your recipient has of your e-mail. Make your subject line a clear and meaningful reflection of your e-mail.

#### 4. Use a professional format

You may think that using a colored or unusual font or a formatted background design in your e-mail messages makes them stand out, but do not use them with professional e-mails. Not only are they not considered professional, but they make your message hard to read. Do not assume that if someone, who is not a friend, is informal with his or her e-mail, you can be as well. Always send a professional, well constructed e-mail in reply. In addition, do not start e-mail messages with an informal "hey" or other similar informal greeting.

#### 5. Avoid sarcasm

It is difficult to judge tone in an e-mail. Do not use ironic or sarcastic language that may not come across as you intended.

#### 6. Do not use "cute" e-mail addresses for important e-mails

An e-mail sent from [sweetiepie07@aol.com](mailto:sweetiepie07@aol.com) will come across as unprofessional. Even if you have to create a new e-mail account, use a more business-like address, such as [HUDSONJ@slu.edu](mailto:HUDSONJ@slu.edu), to be taken more seriously.

### **7. Make your e-mail clear and concise**

When you are e-mailing faculty, staff or networking contacts such as future internship sites, be clear in your purpose. Do not make the recipient guess your request or meaning. Write in a clear and concise format. Write short paragraphs and include one space between them so your reader can find information quickly. Put your most important information in the first or second paragraph so your reader does not have to scroll down to find it. Make your e-mail message as short and succinct as possible; anything longer than a half page is too long. If it is longer than this, a phone call may be a better option.

### **8. Know when to pick up the phone or schedule a meeting**

E-mail is convenient, but it should not completely replace phone calls or face-to-face meetings. For complicated or sensitive matters, pick up the telephone or talk face-to-face.

### **9. Ask before sending a large attachment**

Not only do attachments take up a lot of storage space in your recipient's inbox, but many people will not open attachments for fear of viruses. When possible, include all information in the body of your e-mail. If you do need to send an attachment, explain that you are attaching a Word or PDF file in your e-mail.

### **10. Double check before hitting "send"**

It only takes a few minutes to take another look at your e-mail before you hit *send* but it could improve the impression your e-mail makes. Use your computer's spelling and grammar checks, but be aware that these do not catch all mistakes. One option is to have someone proofread your e-mail before you send it. When you write something, it is easy for you to miss something. Also, the proofreader may be able to catch anything in which the tone can be misinterpreted.

### **11. Sign off with your name**

Do not make the recipient guess who the e-mail is from based on your e-mail address.

### **12. Responding to an e-mail**

When responding to an e-mail, use "reply to" or reference the previous e-mail. Do not respond to an e-mail with a one-word reply, forcing the sender to search for his or her original e-mail to decipher your response.

### **13. Do not just rely on e-mail**

E-mail messages can be lost. Follow-ups can often be done via the telephone or regular mail.

### **14. Use what you learned in English class**

All e-mail should be written with good grammar and sentence structure and correct spelling. If you need assistance with this, please contact the Saint Louis University Writing Center at <http://www.slu.edu/x13305.xml>.

**REMEMBER! How you write an e-mail message can leave a lasting impression - both good and bad!**

#### **References:**

FastWeb: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

Job Web: [www.jobweb.com](http://www.jobweb.com)

University of Wisconsin-Madison – Division of Information Technology:  
[www.doit.wisc.edu/news/story.asp?filename=791](http://www.doit.wisc.edu/news/story.asp?filename=791)