

**THAKUR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE &
COMMERCE**

Autonomous

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

EFFECTIVE EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Email is one of the mode of communication in a particular situation and the messages can be successfully conveyed to your intended audience.

Background

Although email is a valuable tool, it creates some challenges for writers. Miscommunication can easily occur when people have different expectations about the messages that they send and receive. Email is used for many different purposes, including contacting friends, communicating with professors and supervisors, requesting information, and applying for jobs, internships, and scholarships. Depending on your purposes, the messages you send will differ in their formality, intended audience, and desired outcomes.

So—how do you know when sending an email is the most effective way of accomplishing your communication goals? When is a brief message OK, and when it is more appropriate to send a longer, more professional-sounding email? How should you decide what style of writing is appropriate for each task? Keep reading for answers to these questions!

When is Email the appropriate form of communication to use?

Email is a good way to get your message across when:

You need to get in touch with a person who is hard to reach via telephone, does not come to campus regularly, or is not located in the same part of the country or world (for instance, someone who lives in a different time zone).

The information you want to share is not time-sensitive. The act of sending an email is instantaneous, but that does not mean the writer can expect an instantaneous response. For many people, keeping up with their email correspondence is a part of their job, and they only do it during regular business hours. Unless your reader has promised otherwise, assume that it may take a few days for them to respond to your message.

You need to send someone an electronic file, such as a document for a course, a spreadsheet full of data, or a rough draft of your paper.

You need to distribute information to a large number of people quickly (for example, a memo that needs to be sent to the entire office staff).

You need a written record of the communication. Saving important emails can be helpful if you need to refer back to what someone said in an earlier message, provide some kind of proof (for example, proof that you have paid for a service or product), or review the content of an important meeting or memo.

When is email NOT an appropriate form of communication to use?

Email is not an effective means of communication when:

Your message is long and complicated or requires additional discussion that would best be accomplished face-to-face. For example, if you want feedback from your supervisor on your work or if you are asking your professor a question that requires more than a yes/no answer or simple explanation, you should schedule a meeting instead.

The information is highly confidential. Email is NEVER private! Keep in mind that your message could be forwarded on to other people without your knowledge. A backup copy of your email is always stored on a server where it can be easily retrieved by interested parties, even when you have deleted the message and think it is gone forever.

Your message is emotionally charged or the tone of the message could be easily misconstrued. If you would hesitate to say something to someone's face, do not write it in an email.

Who Is Your Audience?

People have different opinions what email should look like, so it is always helpful to be aware of the expectations of your audience. For example, some people regard email as a rapid and informal form of communication—a way to say “hello” or to ask a quick question. However, others view email as simply a more convenient way to transmit a formal letter. Such people may consider an informal email rude or unprofessional.

A message like this one might be OK to send your friend, but not to your professor:

Hey Joan,

Do you know what the assignment is about? Can U help me?

M

Although it may be obvious to you that you wouldn't send such an email to your professor, let's carefully examine what assumptions this message makes about the reader and their expectations. The tone of this message is very casual; it assumes that the reader knows who the sender is and has a close personal relationship with the sender. Because it contains an ambiguous reference to “the assignment,” this message also assumes that

the reader is familiar with the subject matter at hand (for instance, it assumes the reader will know which course and which particular assignment the sender is referring to). The writer also makes an implicit assumption about the reader's comfort with the language that is often used when sending an instant message or text message. The "U" might be taken by some readers as a sign that the writer is too lazy to type out the word "you."

Making assumptions about your audience's expectations increases the risk that your message or its tone will be misinterpreted.

To ensure that your message has its intended effect, use the following questions to help you think about your audience and their needs:

Who is your audience? How often does your audience use email to communicate?

What is your audience's relationship to you—for example, is the reader your teacher? Your boss? A friend? A stranger? How well do you know them? How would you talk to them in a social situation?

What do you want your audience to think or assume about you? What kind of impression do you want to make?

Important components of an Effective Email:

Subject Lines

Email subject lines are like newspaper headlines. They should convey the main point of your message or the idea that you want the reader to take away. Therefore, be as specific as possible. One-word subjects such as "Hi," "Question," or "FYI" are not informative and don't give the reader an idea of how important your message is. If your message is time sensitive, you might want to include a date in your subject line, like "Meeting on Thurs, Dec 2".

Think about the subject lines on the email messages you receive. Which ones do you think are most effective? Why?

Greetings & Sign-offs

Use some kind of greeting and some kind of sign-off. Don't just start with your text, and don't just stop at the end without a polite signature. If you don't know the person well, you may be confused about how to address them ("What do I call my TA/professor?") or how to sign off (Best? Sincerely?). Nonetheless, it is always better to make some kind of effort. When in doubt, address someone more formally to avoid offending them. Some common ways to address your reader are:

Dear Professor Smith,

Hello, Ms. McMahon,

Hi, Mary Jane,

If you don't know the name of the person you are addressing, or if the email addresses a diverse group, try something generic, yet polite:

To whom it may concern,

Dear members of the selection committee,

Hello, Everyone,

Your closing is extremely important because it lets the reader know who is contacting them. Always sign off with your name at the end of your message. If you don't know the reader well, you might also consider including your title and the organization you belong to; for example:

Mary Watkins
Senior Research Associate
Bain and Company

Joseph Smith
UNC-CH, Class of 2009

For your closing, something brief but friendly, or perhaps just your name, will do for most correspondence:

Thank you,

Best wishes,

See you tomorrow,

Regards,

For a very formal message, such as a job application, use the kind of closing that you might see in a business letter:

Sincerely,

Respectfully yours,

Cc: & Bcc: ('Carbon Copy' & 'Blind Carbon Copy')

Copying individuals on an email is a good way to send your message to the main recipient while also sending someone else a copy at the same time. This can be useful if you want to 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 the Cc: field, both the original recipient and all the recipients of the carbon copies can see all the addresses on the top: and Cc: fields. Each person who receives the message will be able to see the addresses of everyone else who received it.

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. The only recipient address that will be visible to all recipients is the one in the To: field. If you don't want any of the recipients to see the email addresses in the list, you can put your own address in the To: field 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.

Some Additional Tips for Writing More Effective Emails

Think about your message before you write it. Don't send email in haste. First, decide on the purpose of your message and what outcome you expect from your communication. Then think about your message's audience and what they may need in order for your message to have the intended result. You will also improve the clarity of your message if you organize your thoughts before you start writing. Jot down some notes about what information you need to convey, what questions you have, etc., then organize your thoughts in a logical sequence. You can try brainstorming techniques like mapping, listing, or outlining to help you organize your thoughts.

Reflect on the tone of your message. When you are communicating via email, your words are not supported by gestures, voice inflections, or other cues, so

it may be easier for someone to misread your tone. For example, sarcasm and jokes are often misinterpreted and may offend your audience. Similarly, be careful about how you address your reader. For instance, beginning an email to your professor or TA with "Hey!" might be perceived as being rude or presumptuous (as in "Hey you!"). If you're unsure about how your message might be received, you might try reading it out loud to a friend to test its tone.

Strive for clarity and brevity in your writing. Have you ever sent an email that caused confusion and took at least one more communication to straighten out? Miscommunication can occur if a message is unclear, disorganized, or just too long and complex for readers to easily follow. Here are some steps you can take to ensure that your message is understood:

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

Be sure to provide the reader with some context. If you're asking a question, cut and paste any relevant text (for example, computer error messages, assignment prompts you don't understand, part of a previous message, etc.) 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.

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

Finally, 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 (for example, an email reply, possible times for a meeting, a recommendation letter, etc.) 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”).

Format your message so that it is easy to read. Use white space to visually separate paragraphs into distinct blocks of text. Bullet important details so that they are easy to pick out. Use bold face type or capital letters to highlight critical information, such as due dates. (But do not type your entire message in capital letters or boldface—your reader may perceive this as “shouting” and won’t be able to tell which parts of the message are especially important.)

Proofread. Re-read messages before you send them. Check your grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. If your email program supports it, use spelling and grammar checking tools. Try reading your message out loud to help you catch any mistakes or awkward phrasing that you might otherwise miss.

Questions to ask yourself before sending an Email message

Is this message suitable for email, or could I better communicate the information with a letter, phone call, or face-to-face meeting?

What is my purpose for sending this email? Will the message seem important to the receiver, or will it be seen as an annoyance and a waste of time?

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 fit the expectations of my audience?

How will my message look when it reaches the receiver? Is it easy to read? Have I used correct grammar and punctuation? Have I divided my thoughts

into discrete paragraphs? Are important items, such as due dates, highlighted in the text?

Have I provided enough context for my audience to easily understand or follow the thread of the message?

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?

Sample Emails

Use what you've just learned to explain why Student 2's email to Professor Jones is more effective than the email written by Student 1. How does the tone of the messages differ? What makes Student 2's email look and sound more appropriate? What are the elements that contribute its clarity? If you were Professor Jones and you received both messages, how would you respond to each one?

Email from Student 1:

Hey,
i need help on my paper can i come by your office tomorrow

Thx

Email from Student 2:

Hi Dr. Jones,

I am in your ENGL 101 class on Thursdays, and I have a question about the paper that is due next Tuesday. I'm not sure that I understand what is meant by the following sentence in the prompt:

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“Write a 10 page paper arguing for or against requiring ENGL 101 for all UNC freshmen and provide adequate support for your point of view.”

I am not sure what would count as “adequate” support. Would using 3 sources be OK?

Can I come by your office tomorrow at 2:00 pm to talk to you about my question? Please let me know if that fits your schedule. If not, I could also come by on Friday after 1:00.

Thank you,

Tim Smith

Here are two versions of an email from a supervisor, Jane Doe, to a group of her employees. Which version do you think is most effective? Why?

Version 1 of Jane Doe’s Email:

Subject: Tomorrow

As you know, tomorrow afternoon we’ll be meeting to discuss the status of all of our current projects. Donuts will be provided. Be sure to arrive on time and bring along the materials you have been working on this week—bring enough copies for everyone. Some of these material might include your calendars, reports, and any important emails you have sent. Also, I wanted to remind you that your parking permit requests are due later this week; you should turn those in to Ms. Jones, and if she is not at her desk when you stop by, you can email them to her.

Version 2 of Jane Doe’s Email:

Subject: materials for Wed. staff meeting

Hi, everyone—

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For tomorrow's 3 p.m. staff meeting in the conference room, please bring 15 copies of the following materials:

Your project calendar

A one-page report describing your progress so far

A list of goals for the next month

Copies of any progress report messages you have sent to clients this past month

See you tomorrow—

Jane

Top 10 Strategies for Writing Effective Email

Source: Seton Hill University Website

Writer: Prof. Dennis G. Jerz

Follow these Email Etiquette tips in order to write more effective Email.

While Millennials typically prefer texting, the improvised, back-and-forth pattern we expect of texting conversations differs greatly from the pre-planned, more self-contained messages most professionals expect in the workplace.

If you are planning an outing with friends, you expect multiple rapid exchanges asking for clarification and providing corrections on the fly. Since you are usually texting somebody you already know well, about a shared interest, you don't need to provide much context.

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But most professionals do not want to engage in a leisurely back-and-forth in order to get their work done. They want to clear this item from their inbox, perhaps by passing it to an assistant or kicking it upstream, without having to ask the sender “I dunno, what do you think?” or “What did you mean by that emoji?”

- **Write a meaningful subject line.**
- **Keep the message focused.**
- **Avoid attachments.**
- **Identify yourself clearly.**
- **Be kind. Don't flame.**
- **Proofread.**
- **Don't assume privacy.**
- **Distinguish between formal and informal situations.**
- **Respond Promptly.**
- **Show Respect and Restraint.**

1. Write A Meaningful Subject Line

Before you hit “send,” take a moment to write a subject line that accurately describes the content, giving your reader a concrete reason to open your message. A vague or blank subject line is a missed opportunity to inform or persuade your reader.

Remember — your message is not the only one in your recipient's mailbox. A clear subject line will help a busy professional to decide that your email is worthwhile.



Subject: [Blank]

A blank subject line suggests that your name in the "From" line is all your recipient should need in order to make your message a top priority. That could come across as arrogant, or at the very least, thoughtless. A well-chosen subject line is an important opportunity to inform and persuade your reader.



Subject: "Important! Read Immediately!! "

Rather than brashly announcing that the secret contents of your mystery message are inexplicably important...



Subject: "All Cars in the Lower Lot Will Be Towed in 1 Hour."

...write a functional subject line that actually conveys the important idea.



Subject: "Quick question. "

If the question is quick, why not just ask it in the subject line? This subject line is hardly useful.



Subject: "Follow-up about Friday"

Fractionally better — provided that the recipient remembers why a follow-up was necessary.



Subject: "That file you requested."

Many email users get scads of virus-laden spam with vague titles like this. The more specific you are, the more likely your recipient's spam-blocker will let your message through.



Subject: "10 confirmed for Friday... will we need a larger room? "

Upon reading this revised, informative subject line, the recipient immediately starts thinking about the size of the room, not about whether it will be worth it to open the email.

2. Keep the Message Focused

Why are you writing? Are you responding to a request? Apologizing for an error on your part? Asking for the recipient to take some action for you?

Purpose: Any textbook on business and professional writing will include examples of complaint and adjustment letters, proposal letters, progress reports, application letters, and so forth.

Directness: You probably don't need to open with "Dear Ms. Jones," engage in personal chit-chat, and close with "Yours Truly." (If you really want to be that formal, send a letter on paper instead.)

Organization: Readers will often get partway through a complex message, hit "reply" as soon as they have something to contribute, and forget to read the rest. That's human nature.



Number your points in more complex message. (Start with a clear statement of how many parts there are to your message.)

Split unrelated points into separate, purposeful emails.

If you send all your employees a message that only relates to some of them, a lot of people will waste time reading the whole thing, in order to determine whether any part of it applies to them.

Other people will give up as soon as they find any detail that does not apply to them. (Again, this is human nature.)

Politeness: Please and thank-you are still important, but wordiness wastes your reader's time (which is rude).

	Indirect and wasteful: "Dearest Arnold: I would be very much obliged if, at your earliest convenience, you could send me the current password for the website. I look forward to your response. Have a nice day! Yours Truly, Philomena."
	Blunt to the point of rudeness: "Need the password for the website."

If you get a message like this, you might assume the sender trusts you and really needs your help; however, if you send a message like this, you might appear needy and panicky. Is that how you want to come across? Think about it.



Urgent, yet polite: "Site is down, but I can't troubleshoot without the new password. Do you know it?"

To help your reader focus on your message: keep your text readable.

Proofread, especially when your message asks your recipient to do work for you. All-caps comes across as shouting, and no-caps makes you look like a lazy teenager. Regardless of your intention, people will respond accordingly.

If you are in middle school, a gushing statement "thx 4 ur help 2day ur gr8! " may make a busy professional smile — or shudder.

Often, the sweetness of the gesture won't be enough. u want ur prof r ur boss 2 think u can't spl? LOL ;-)

Write short paragraphs, separated by blank lines. Most people find unbroken blocks of text boring, or even intimidating. Take the time to format your message for the ease of your reader.

Avoid fancy typefaces. Don't depend upon bold font or large size to add nuances. Your recipient's email reader may not have all the features that yours does. In a pinch, use asterisks to show **emphasis**.

3. Avoid Attachments

Rather than forcing you reader to download an attachment and open it in a separate program, you will probably get faster results if you just copy-paste the most important part of the document into the body of your message.



To: All 1000 Employees
From: Eager Edgar
Subject: A helpful book everyone should read

Hello, everyone. I've attached a PDF that I think you'll all find very useful. This is the third time I sent it the file — the version I sent yesterday had a typo on page 207, so I've sent the whole thing again. Since some of you noted that the large file size makes it a bit awkward, I've also attached each chapter as a separate document. Let me know what you think! Attachments:

Big Honking File.pdf (356MB)

BHF Cover.pdf (25MB)

BHF Chapter 1.pdf (35MB)

[...]

Okay, raise your hands... how many of us would delete the above message immediately, without looking at **any** of those attachments?



To: Bessie Professional
From: Morris Ponsybil
Subject: Email tips — a subject for an office workshop?

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Bessie, I came across some tips on streamlining professional communications. Has anyone volunteered to present at the office workshop next month? Let me know if you'd like me to run a little seminar (20 minutes?) on using email effectively. Below, I'll paste the table of contents. I'll send you the whole thing as a PDF if you want it. Table of Contents

Write a meaningful subject line.

Keep the message focused and readable.

Avoid attachments.

[...]

Recognize that attachments

Consume bandwidth (do you want your recipient to ignore your request so as to avoid paying for a mobile download?)

Can carry viruses

Don't always translate correctly for people who read their email on portable devices.

May require your recipient to have certain software installed (such as Microsoft Publisher or Apple's Pages)


4. Identify Yourself Clearly

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If you telephoned someone outside your closest circle, someone who probably wouldn't recognize your voice, you would probably say something like "Hello, Ms. Wordsworth, this is Sally Griffin." A formal "Dear Ms. Wordsworth" salutation is not necessary for routine workplace communication.

When we send text messages to our friends, we expect a lot of back-and-forth. But professionals who use email don't enjoy getting a cryptic message from an email address they don't recognize.

While a routine email does not require a formal salutation such as "Dear Ms. Wordsworth," ask yourself whether the person you are writing knows you well enough to recognize your email address.

 To: Professor Blinderson
From: FuZzYkItTy2000@hotmail.com
Subject: [Blank]Yo goin 2 miss class whats the homework

Professor Blinderson will probably reply, "Please let me know your name and which class you're in, so that I can respond meaningfully. I don't recognize the address FuZzYkItTy2000@hotmail.com."

 To: Professor Blinderson
From: m.ponsybil@gmail.com
Subject: EL227 Absence, Oct 10Hello, Prof. Blinderson. This is Morris Ponsybil, from EL227 section 2. This morning, I just found out that the curling team has advanced to the playoffs, so I'm going to be out of town on the 10th. According to the syllabus, it looks like I will miss a paper workshop and the discussion of Chapter 10. May I

email you my Chapter 10 discussion questions before I leave town? And could I come to your office hour at 2pm on the 12th, in order to discuss the paper? I've asked Cheryl Jones to take notes for me. Thank you very much. I'll see you in class tomorrow.

If you are asking the other person to do you a favor, providing the right information will give him or her a good reason to decide in your favor. In this case, Morris Ponsybil shows his professor he cares enough about the class to propose a solution to the problem his absence will cause.

When contacting someone cold, be polite and brief. If you are asking for a stranger to do something for you for free, be prepared to hear nothing in response.

Even if you already have a connection with the person you are contacting, a little context is helpful. Every fall, I get emails from "bad_boy2315@yahoo.com" or "FuZzYkItTy2000@hotmail.com" who ask a question about "class" and don't sign their real names.

If you are following up on a face-to-face contact, you might appear too timid if you assume your recipient doesn't remember you; but you can drop casual hints to jog their memory: "I enjoyed talking with you about usability testing in the elevator the other day."

While formal phrases such as "Dear Professor Sneedlewood" and "Sincerely Yours," are unnecessary in email, when contacting someone outside your own organization, you should write a signature line that includes your full

name and at least a link to a blog or online profile page (something that does not require your recipient to log in first).

5. Be kind don't flame

Think before you click "Send."

If you find yourself writing in anger, save a draft, go get a cup of coffee, and imagine that tomorrow morning someone has taped your email outside your door. Would your associates and friends be shocked by your language or attitude?

Or would they be impressed by how you kept your cool, how you ignored the bait when your correspondent stooped to personal attacks, and how you carefully explained your position (or admitted your error, or asked for a reconsideration, etc.)>

Will you have to work with this person for several months? Do you want a copy of your bitter screed to surface years from now, when you want a letter of recommendation?

@!\$% &*@!! &(*!

Go ahead... write it, revise it, liven it up with traditional Lebanese curses, print it out, throw darts on it, and scribble on it with crayon. Do whatever you need in order to get it out of your system. Just don't hit "Send" while you're still angry.



From: Clair Haddad

To: Ann O. Ying

Subject: Re: Ongoing Problems with Project I'm not sure how

to respond, since last week you told Sue that you didn't need any extra training, so I cancelled Wednesday's workshop. I can CC Sue in on this thread if you like, since she's the one who will have to approve the budget if we reschedule it. Meanwhile, I can loan you my copies of the manual, or we can look into shifting the work to someone else. Let me know what you'd like me to do next.—Original Message –

From: Ann O. Ying

I tried all morning to get in touch with you. Couldn't you find a few minutes in between meetings to check your messages? I'm having a rough time on this project, and I'm sorry if this is last-minute, but I've never done this before and I think the least you could do is take some time to explain it again.

If your recipient has just lambasted you with an angry message, rather than reply with a point-by-point rebuttal, you can always respond with a brief note like this, which

casually invokes the name of someone the angry correspondent is likely to respect (in order to diffuse any personal antagonism that may otherwise have developed) and

refocuses the conversation on solutions (in this conversation, Ann has already dug herself into a hole, and Clair has nothing to gain by joining her there)

6. Proofread

If you are asking someone else to do work for you, take the time to make your message look professional.

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While your spell checker won't catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos. If you are sending a message that will be read by someone higher up on the chain of command (a superior or professor, for instance), or if you're about to mass-mail dozens or thousands of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit "send". Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

7. Don't Assume Privacy

A good motto: praise in public, and criticize in private. Don't send anything over email that you wouldn't want posted — with your name attached — in the break room.

Email is not secure. Just as random pedestrians could reach into a physical mailbox and intercept envelopes, a curious hacker, a malicious criminal, and your IT department can probably read any and all email messages in your work account.

If you stretch the truth in an email (downplaying a problem, leaving out an important detail, etc.), you're creating a written record that your recipient can (and will) use to determine whether

You are uninformed about the truth

You are informed but deliberately misrepresenting the truth

Your confused and conflicting emails mean you aren't a reliable source for determining the truth

8. Distinguish between formal and informal situations.

When you are writing to a friend or a close colleague, it is OK to use "smilies" :-), abbreviations (IIRC for "if I recall correctly", LOL for "laughing

out loud,” etc.) and nonstandard punctuation and spelling (like that found in instant messaging or chat rooms).

These linguistic shortcuts are generally signs of friendly intimacy, like sharing cold pizza with a family friend. If you tried to share that same cold pizza with a first date, or a visiting dignitary, you would give off the impression that you did not really care about the meeting. By the same token, don't use informal language when your reader expects a more formal approach.

Always know the situation, and write accordingly.

9. Respond Promptly

If you want to appear professional and courteous, make yourself available to your online correspondents. Even if your reply is, “Sorry, I'm too busy to help you now,” at least your correspondent won't be waiting in vain for your reply.

10. Show Respect & Restraint

Many a flame war has been started by someone who hit “reply all” instead of “reply.”

While most people know that email is not private, it is good form to ask the sender before forwarding a personal message. If someone emails you a request, it is perfectly acceptable to forward the request to a person who can help — but forwarding a message in order to ridicule the sender is tacky.

Use BCC instead of CC when sending sensitive information to large groups. (For example, a professor sending a bulk message to students who are in danger of failing, or an employer telling unsuccessful applicants that a position is no longer open.) The name of everyone in the CC list goes out with the message, but the names of people on the BCC list (“blind carbon copy”)

are hidden. Put your own name in the "To" box if your mail editor doesn't like the blank space.

Be tolerant of other people's etiquette blunders. If you think you've been insulted, quote the line back to your sender and add a neutral comment such as, "I'm not sure how to interpret this... could you elaborate?"

Sometimes Email is Too Fast!

A colleague once asked me for help, and then almost immediately sent a follow-up informing me she had solved the problem on her own.

But before reading her second message, I replied at length to the first. Once I learned that there was no need for any reply, I worried that my response would seem pompous, so I followed up with a quick apology:

"Should have paid closer attention to my email."

What I meant to say was "[I] should have looked more carefully at my [list of incoming] email [before replying]," but I could tell from my colleague's terse reply that she had interpreted it as if I was criticizing her.

If I hadn't responded so quickly to the first message, I would have saved myself the time I spent writing a long answer to an obsolete question. If I hadn't responded so quickly to the second message, I might not have alienated the person I had been so eager to help.

Source: University of North Carolina Writing Center

10 tips for writing effective business mails:

<https://youtu.be/5sXwerFvCn0>

How to turn your Basic English into Business English:

<https://youtu.be/2ZDNgtAsbw>