

E-Mail Etiquette

1. **Understand the difference between “To” and “CC”.** As a rule of thumb, the more people you send an e-mail to, the less likely any single person will respond to it, much less perform any action that you requested. The people you include in the “To” field should be the people you expect to read and respond to the message. The “CC” field should be used sparingly. You should only include people who have a need to stay in the know. The “BCC” field should be used even more sparingly, if ever. People you include in the “BCC” field will not be visible to others.
2. **Keep messages brief and to the point.** Make your most important point first, then provide detail if necessary. Make it clear at the beginning of the message why you are writing. There is nothing worse for the recipient than having to wade through a long message to get to the point. Worse, if you send long messages, it is much less likely that the person will act on what you have sent or respond to it. It’s just too much work. It often gets set aside and, unfortunately, forgotten.
3. **Don’t discuss multiple subjects in a single message.** If you need to discuss more than one subject, send multiple e-mails. This makes it easy to scan subject lines later to find the message you need. It also contributes to briefer e-mail messages and a greater likelihood of a response. Also, the more specific you can be about your subject heading, the better.
4. **Reply in a timely manner.** I don’t think e-mail demands an instantaneous response. But you must reply in a timely manner, otherwise you will incrementally damage your reputation and decrease your effectiveness.
5. **Be mindful of your tone.** Unlike face-to-face meetings or even phone calls, those who read your e-mail messages don’t have the benefit of your pitch, tone, inflection, or other non-verbal cues. As a result, you need to be careful about your tone. Sarcasm is especially dangerous. If something gets “lost in translation,” you risk offending the other party. The more matter-of-fact you can be, the better.
6. **Don’t use e-mail to criticize others.** E-mail is a terrific way to commend someone or praise them. It is not an appropriate medium for criticism. Chances are, you will simply offend the other person, and they will miss your point. These kinds of conversations are usually better handled face-to-face or, if necessary, over the phone. Especially, don’t use e-mail to criticize a third party. E-mail messages live forever. They are easily forwarded. You can create a firestorm of conflict if you are not careful.

7. **Don't reply in anger.** In the heat of the moment, we can write some brilliant replies. We can say things in writing that we would never have the guts to say face-to-face. This is precisely why you should never ever fire off an e-mail in anger. They almost never serve their purpose or your long-term interests. They burn up relationships faster than just about anything you can do. If it makes you feel better, go ahead and write the message, and then delete it. Usually a day or two after you didn't send an angry e-mail, you'll understand the wisdom of restraint.
8. **Don't overuse "reply to all."** Hitting "reply all" unnecessarily just adds more clutter to everyone's already unwieldy inbox. Your default response should be to reply *only to the sender*. Before you reply to everyone, make sure that everyone needs to know.
9. **Don't forward chain letters.** These can be forgiven when they are from your mother, but only add clutter in the workplace. Just delete.
10. **Don't "copy up" as a means of coercion.** It's one thing to copy someone's boss as a courtesy. You can do this when you send a request or assignment to someone who is not a direct report. But it is not a good idea to do this as subtle – or not so subtle – form of coercion. You may be tempted to do this when you don't get a response to an earlier request. But you will be better served to pick up the phone and call the person. If they are not responding to your e-mails, try a different communication strategy.
11. **Don't overuse the "high priority" flag.** Most e-mail programs allow you to set the priority of the message. "High priority" should be reserved for messages that are truly urgent. If you use it for every message, you will simply be ignored. It's like the boy who cried "wolf" too many times.
12. **Do not write in ALL CAPS.** This is the digital equivalent of shouting. Besides ALL CAPS are harder to read (as anyone in advertising will tell you.)
13. **Don't send or forward e-mails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks.** If you do so, you can put yourself or your company at risk. You could be sued for simply passing something along, even if you aren't the original author.
14. **Remember that company e-mail isn't private.** You have no legal protection. Anyone with sufficient authority or access can monitor your conversations on company-owned servers. If you need to communicate privately, then get a free personal e-mail account.

15. **Use a signature with your contact information.** This is a courtesy for those receiving your messages. It also cuts down on e-mail messages, since people don't have to send a second or third e-mail asking for your phone number or mailing address. There is a standard company email signature set up by IT. If you don't have it or have lost it, ask for it.
16. **Use your spell-checker.** Take your correspondence seriously. It reflects on you. If you use bad grammar or punctuation, then I think it reflects negatively on you and your company.
17. **Re-read your e-mail before you send it.** Try to do this with every single message. Your fingers sometimes have trouble keeping up with your brain. It's not unusual to drop a word or two as you're racing to transcribe a thought. Therefore, it's a good idea to re-read your messages and make sure you are communicating clearly and observing good e-mail etiquette.
18. **Assume that everything communicated TO you is for your ears only and everything you communicate will be shared.**
19. **Be very careful about the BCC function.** Avoid using it at all except when you are e-mailing a very large group of people and do not want to share everyone's e-mail address with the entire group. In that circumstance, the entire group would be entered into the BCC field rather than the TO field. If you are e-mailing back and forth with someone, it is assumed that it is between the two of you and hiding that you are copying someone else can be hurtful and could damage the relationship. If you are confident it is OK to copy the person, then do it openly in the CC field.
20. **Be very careful forwarding a chain of e-mails.** Make sure everything in the chain is OK and appropriate to share. When in doubt, start a new e-mail. If you are careless with your forwarding or blind copying, people will hesitate before they e-mail you.
21. **Never forward a message from someone above you to a peer or subordinate** unless it is clear that it is only an informational e-mail. If you are unsure, then ask for permission to forward it. Often times, a supervisor uses a different communication style with you than they would want to use with your subordinates. Respect that. Also, it may be the expectation of your boss, even in an informal e-mail, that you will filter the information when sharing it. Otherwise they would have e-mailed your team directly.
22. **Never use e-mail for performance management discussions.** Instead, provide corrective feedback in person.

23. Remember that when you e-mail anyone using your work e-mail account, you are speaking on behalf of your employer.

99-Specific Recommendations for proper use of email.

- Be careful to stay within a respectful time window. (7AM to 7PM)
- Allow for proper response time. We need to protect managers' day off by not sounding as if we expect the GM to be contacted at home for an immediate response. We can add phrases like, "the next time you're in..." or "in the next couple of days...."
- Do not assume anyone is checking email during off times. If you have an emergency, then you should call them – they will respond.
- Emails should not be sent to the managers' personal email. We should also not be texting managers.
- If an email is sent and a response is needed, it should say in the Subject Line, response needed.
- If you send an emergency email that needs a phone call follow up Ex. Product recall, please make note of that in the body of your email.