



Netiquette: Business Email Basics

An overview of online communication manners and protocol for employees.

Business emailing 101

Here's more email etiquette to practice once you're hired. Remember, business professionals aren't always forgiving.

Realize that everything you send on company premises using business facilities legally belongs to the employer. Confirm if there's a company email policy. Limit personal emails so 1) private matters don't risk becoming public or used against you; 2) network traffic and bandwidth don't get bogged down; and 3) you don't risk personal and company liability. After all, it's the company time and dime—you're paid to work, not play.

You can't hide behind email.

Remember, email is a tool that communicates information to generate a desired response. How you craft it will effect the outcome.

Be professional. Be polite. Use titles and names; check their spelling. Include a pleasant opening and closing. Avoid off-color language. Use upper and lower case. Personalize where needed; emails are not necessarily one size fits all. Nix emoticons and acronyms. PROOFREAD; typos reflect poorly. Reply to emails and answer all questions promptly.

Be clear. Enter an appropriate topic in the Subject field. It will make future searches easier and avoids flagging the email as SPAM. Modify as necessary, depending on the direction of the exchange.

Sign on. Sign off. Your name should display in the "From" field; avoid nicknames. Include a brief signature file with crucial contact info: Name, company, phone, fax, email. Include the company disclaimer, if provided; it limits corporate liability.

Don't victimize others. When sending a mass email, use Bcc: to avoid sharing everyone's email with Spammers and the rest of the world.

Don't cry wolf. Avoid overusing the High Priority setting, otherwise you'll lose it's effectiveness. And don't overuse punctuation like "!"

"And your point is..?" Be concise; long emails risk not being read. Include all necessary information

to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary back and forth clarification. Be brief in delivery, but not short in tone.

Easy on the eyes. Keep sentences and paragraphs short, with spaces in between; bullet important points. Use plain text and standard fonts. Avoid HTML and background patterns. Limit multiple fonts and colors. Send a test email to yourself.

Keep the thread, cut the chain. Retain relevant parts of the thread when replying. Don't blindly forward chain letters or promos; they might be hoaxes or contain viruses.

For your eyes only. Don't forward emails intended only for you without getting permission first from the originator; it's unprofessional and undermines trust.

Beware of identity theft. Avoid emailing confidential credit card numbers, passwords, or account info.

Don't hit Send when you're upset. Cool off first, or possibly regret it later. Don't criticize third parties; printed emails could come back to bite you.

See? Cc: keeps people in the loop publicly, Bcc: privately. Use "Reply All" in moderation. DON'T Reply All if you're Bcc:ed! Avoid return receipts (RR).

Attachments. Large attachments increase download time and may fill up the recipient's inbox. Alert the receiver first, or compress or resample, if possible. PDFs and Word docs are best.

No "flaming". Nothing defamatory, racist, or offensive. Avoid politics and religion; they're potentially controversial.

Check Trash and Junk folders. Sometimes vital emails end up there.

Jumping ship? Don't saw off the branch you're sitting on by using your company email to job search. Create a new account with any number of free online providers.



i n a nutshell:

Be efficient and effective when emailing for business:

- **Be polite and professional; respect company time and facilities**
- **Don't compromise others' privacy; use Bcc:**
- **Don't overuse "Cc:," "Reply All," and "!"**
- **PROOFREAD**
- **Use a proper email signature**
- **Add new contacts to your address book for approval by Spam filters**
- **Call to follow up on crucial emails**

The Internet is a public forum, so email wisely. There is no "Un-Send".