GLEN ELLYN
PARK DISTRICT

15 Tips for Writing Professional Emails

Here are some tips and tricks for writing a successful and meaningful professional email. Remember, business correspondence should be polished, even when you're sending it via email.

1. Be clear in your subject line and match the message

The subject line should summarize why you are contacting them. Do not hesitate to change the subject as the thread or content of the email chain changes. Proof your subject line as well as you would the rest of your email. Good subject lines will also make it easier to find past emails.

2. Consider your audience

When you compose an email message, make sure your tone matches your audience. If they tend to be very polite and formal, write in that language. The same goes for a receiver who tends to be more informal and relaxed. Still, avoid overly casual words and phrases. If you are not familiar with the recipient, it is best to lean toward polite and formal.

3. Include a greeting

Even if you're drafting a short email, include a greeting. Casual language such as 'Hey' may be fine to send to a friend, but for professional emails it is not the best choice. On the other hand, 'Dear' may be too formal. A simple 'Hi [NAME],' or 'Hello [NAME],' is more appropriate. Your greeting should be consistent with the level of respect and formality of the person you're communicating with.

4. Keep the email concise and to the point

Make your email as brief as possible without leaving out key information. Try not to address too many subjects at once as this can make your message lengthy, challenging to read, and difficult to act on. When editing your email, take out any information that is irrelevant to the topic you're addressing. Create short, simple sentences by removing filler words and extraneous information.

5. Make it easy on the eyes

Add spaces between paragraphs or bullets for easy skimming. In addition, keep your most valuable information at the beginning of each paragraph so they can recognize your most important points. Avoid overusing colors, bold, italics, and underline as well, which make an email look cluttered. Your font should be set to Verdana, which was designed for screen displays, at font size 11.

6. Avoid using shortcuts to real words, abbreviations/acronyms, and all caps

- Professional emails require a certain level of formal language. Words from grown businesspeople using shortcuts like '4 U' or 'Gr8' makes you look less professional.
- Abbreviations or acronyms, like SARC, must first be introduced within parenthesis before using them in the rest of your message e.g., Spring Avenue Recreation Center (SARC).
- Writing in all capital letters ("all caps") is often interpreted as shouting.

7. Emojis are (generally) a bad idea

Professionalism trumps personality. You may have the best of intentions when using emojis in business communications (greater warmth, better rapport!) but research has found those who read messages with emojis rate senders as less competent. Don't use emojis with people you don't know very well or until you identify the conversational style of the recipient.

8. Use question marks and exclamation points sparingly

The maximum number of exclamation points in a business email? One. Otherwise, you risk looking childish. Do not use multiple punctuation marks at the end of a sentence e.g. ??? or ?!

9. Don't omit Oxford commas

The Oxford comma can help you avoid miscommunication and confusion.

EXAMPLE: I love my parents, Lady Gaga and Humpty Dumpty.
Without the Oxford comma, the sentence above could be interpreted as saying that you love your parents, and your parents are Lady Gaga and Humpty Dumpty. Here's the same sentence with the Oxford comma: I love my parents, Lady Gaga, and Humpty Dumpty.

10. Use a proper closer

Sign off with a brief 'Thank you,' 'Best,' or another simple send-off, and then your name.

11. Always include a signature

The Glen Ellyn Park District has a branded style for email signatures which supplies important contact information, helps us build a consistent image, and boosts reputability. You should set your signature to automatically appear at the bottom of your emails. For email signature guidelines, contact the Superintendent of Marketing.

12. Proofread your email

Even when you write a quick and short email, it can easily include mistakes. Small spelling or grammar errors can make or break someone's opinion of you. Re-read your email before you send it to avoid any slip-ups. Also, double-check to ensure you've included any attachments you may have referenced in your message and give attachments clear titles that make them easy to identify. If it is an important email, you might ask your supervisor to read it over before sending.

13. Turn on the "Undo" setting

When enabled, Outlook will wait a few seconds before sending emails. After you click the "Send" button, you have a few seconds to click the "Undo" button. This stops Outlook from sending the email out, so you can make edits. If you don't click the button, the email will be sent out as usual.

14. Respond promptly

Per our Guide to Customer Care, you should respond to email messages within one business day.

15. Your email reflects you

Every email you send adds to or detracts from your reputation. If your email is filled with mistakes, the recipient will be inclined to think of you as a careless and disorganized person.

Did you know...

The Editor in the web-based version of Microsoft Word has more advanced tools than the desktop version, which can help elevate your writing to the next level.

Based on the quality of your document, Word will automatically calculate the score and show it in the Editor. You need to have at least 100 words for Word to do this for you. Under the score, you will see the options to change your writing style. You can change the style to formal, professional, or casual and the Editor will recalculate the score accordingly. Try to get as close to 100 as possible.