



Writing a Professional E-mail

Most of us use e-mail daily. When exchanging e-mails with your friends, you probably use informal language, slang, and even smiley faces. However, when writing an e-mail to your professor or other professional, your tone should not be the same as the one you use with your friends.

The way you address a professional person, what you say, and how you say it affects the way the person receiving the e-mail perceives you. Professors are more likely to respond positively to your e-mails if you use a courteous and professional tone. In order to write a well-received e-mail, remember the following do's and don'ts:

Do's

- Do come up with a relevant and specific subject to write in the subject line such as "Absence from class today" or "Research Paper question."
- Do refer to the person as Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr. instead of beginning with "Hi Bill" or just his or her first name, unless your professor or other professional you are writing to has asked you to call him or her something specific.
- Keep your e-mail concise.
 - Keep in mind that the person you are e-mailing is probably very busy. If you write several paragraphs before getting to your main point, the person may not have the time or the patience to read it all.
- Make sure you have actually attached any attachments you mean to send.
- Remember to use common courtesy words like please and thank you.
- Capitalize the correct words (ie. The first words of each sentence).
 - if you do not capitalize, the e-mail receiver might think you are lazy. doesn't the lack of capitals here make it look like we just didn't care when we wrote this handout? it sure does!
- Proofread for spelling and grammar errors!
 - **Spell check is not enough.** It will not catch homonym errors (ie. If you use "there" instead of "their")
- **See a sample e-mail on the next page**



Don'ts



- Don't use emoticons such as ☺ or :-P
- Don't write in all caps (THIS MAKES IT SEEM LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING).
- Don't write in text-speak. Make sure that you use the formal spelling of words.
 - Avoid: Can u send me info plz? Thanx 4 that!
- Don't use **fancy** fonts or **bold** your words when it is not necessary.
- Don't try to be witty or funny.
 - When you write, the person reading cannot hear your tone of voice and may not be able to tell when you are joking. Your humor could be lost in translation, or it could come across as offensive or inappropriate.
- Don't be vague.
 - Avoid: "It will be done by 3pm." [specify what "it" is]

Sample Professional E-mail

Professor Smith,

I will not be in class today due to a family emergency. Attached, please find the response assignment due for today. Please let me know if there are any problems with the assignment or concerns about my absence from class.

Thank you,

Jane Doe

Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this handout, providing that the following information remain intact:

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