



Business E-mail Etiquette

Online communication guidelines for employees.

Business e-mailing 101.

Now that you've mastered the rules for basic e-mailing, it's time to brush up on your business e-mail etiquette for when you're hired.

It's important to realize that everything you send on company property using business amenities legally belongs to your employer. Make sure to find out the company's e-mail policy. Limit personal e-mails for the following reasons: you don't want to risk private e-mails going public or being used against you; you don't want network traffic and bandwidth to get bogged down; and you don't want to risk personal and company liability. Remember, you're paid to work, not play.

Think before you type.

The purpose of e-mail is to generate a desired response. What you type and how you type it will affect the outcome.

Be professional. Be respectful and polite. Use and check the spelling of titles and names. Include an agreeable opening and closing. Use upper and lower case. Personalize when and where needed. Avoid emoticons and acronyms. PROOFREAD – typos reflect poorly. Reply to e-mails and answer all questions in a timely manner.

Be clear. Enter a relevant topic in the Subject field. It makes it less likely that the recipient will flag it as Spam mail.

Name names. You should make sure your name displays in the From field – avoid nicknames. At the end of the e-mail, include a brief signature with contact info: name, e-mail, phone, fax, and company info. Include your company's disclaimer, if provided – it limits corporate liability.

Don't make everyone public. When sending a mass e-mail, use Bcc: to avoid sharing everyone's e-mail with everyone else.

Be concise. Long e-mails risk not being read. Avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary back and forth clarification by including all necessary information. Be brief, but don't sound short in tone. Keep sentences and paragraphs concise. Avoid using multiple fonts, colors, and background patterns – use a standard font and plain text.

Don't be rash. Don't send e-mails when you're upset or angry. Give yourself enough time to cool off, otherwise you might regret it. Don't criticize third parties or gossip via e-mail. Printed e-mails could come back to haunt you.

Cc: vs. Bcc: Cc: keeps people public, Bcc: keeps people private. Use Reply All in moderation, but NEVER Reply All when you've been Bcc:ed.

Don't get too attached. Large attachments increase download time and take up more space in the recipient's inbox. If possible, compress the file to make it smaller. PDFs and Word doc formats are best.

Simply put:

When e-mailing for business:

- Be polite and professional – respect company time and property.
- Use Bcc: to avoid compromising others' privacy.
- Keep things short, clear, and to the point.
- PROOFREAD everything.
- Use PDF or Word doc formats when sending attachments and keep them as small as possible.
- Use an appropriate signature that contains important contact info.
- Add new contacts to your address book to avoid important e-mails being sent to the Junk folder.
- Call to follow up on critical e-mails.

Check the trash. Sometimes crucial e-mails end up in the Trash and Junk/Spam folders.

Don't burn your bridges. If you're planning on leaving your current place of employment, don't use your company e-mail for your new job search. Create a new account with any of the countless free online providers.

No-no's. Don't use slang or offensive, racist, or defamatory language. Avoid talk of religion and politics – they're potentially controversial.

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