

EMAIL ETIQUETTE FRAMEWORK

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ITS EMAIL ETIQUETTE FRAMEWORK

In today's world, messaging services have undoubtedly led to a decrease in the number of emails we send each day. However, emails remain an important element of our professional lives and as such we ought to consider whether our email etiquette is up to scratch.

The tone and appearance of emails create a distinct impression of professionalism both about the sender and about the institution they represent, keeping in mind that generally emails are the initial (and sometimes only) contact with a person/organisation.

This document contains some easy tips and tricks to fine-tune email etiquette in the best possible way.

The Subject Line:

Your subject line should be brief, clear and to the point. It should have fewer than 30 characters – that way, it will be displayed in full on a smartphone. Avoid using words such as 'important' or 'urgent' unless it is a genuinely pressing matter.

The Greeting:

Your very first email to a person you do not know should always start with a formal greeting such as Dear Mr Smith or Dear Miss Jones.

If you do not know (or are unsure) who will read your email, you should address it generically as follows: Dear Sir/Madam. The greeting should always be followed by a comma! (Dear Mr Doe, Dear Mrs Green, etc.)

Email and digital communication in general is often a less formal channel than traditional mail. Thus, if you have corresponded with a person previously, you do not need to use a formal greeting (unless the whole conversation has remained at (or generally requires) a formal level). However, do use a courteous and clear greeting as an opening. 'Hi' is a good option that still maintains a degree of formality ('Hey', however, is arguably too informal).

The most common 'informal' greeting is Dear + First Name (Eg. Dear John, Dear Jane).

Begin your email with phrases such as "Good Morning," "Good Afternoon," "Good Evening" or "Hello." "Good Day" or "Greetings" are other phrases used frequently in the international arena.

NOTE:

It's worth adding that you should ensure you have someone's name spelled correctly before using it. A misspelled name will come across almost equally as impersonal as not including a name at all.

Use someone's first name, as it is easy to glaze over a mass-sent and impersonal message.

The Message:

Make sure that your email contains good spelling/grammar and proofread once you've finished writing.

When you are writing your email, leave a blank line between paragraphs. Spacing is very important as it helps the reader follow your text.

Bullet points and numbered lists are also a good option for emails. Don't forget that professionals often receive a large volume of emails and bullet points will help to get your point across succinctly.

If you need to include an attachment, try to keep them as small as possible unless unavoidable. You can compress or zip files. In certain cases, you could also send low-resolution images in lieu of high-resolution ones, but this isn't always appropriate.

When you attach a file, be kind enough to take a few extra seconds to paste it into the body of the email as well. This shows consideration to the recipient, by saving them time and risk in opening attachments. Is this more time consuming for you? Yes. Is it worth it? Yes.

Another seemingly obvious tip, though worth mentioning, is that you shouldn't send a corrupted or virus-laden file. Use a virus scanner before sending. Putting a Trojan horse on someone's computer in the guise of a quarterly figures report doesn't exactly scream 'consummate professional'.

The Signature:

Although your work email includes a corporate signature, you should also (always) still sign out your message in the text. It's a simple matter of adding two lines: "Regards," and your name on the following line.

Other Dos & Don'ts of email etiquette:

1. Check your mail regularly and reply as promptly as you can. Try to always reply, even if the reply is brief.
2. Avoid using "Reply-to-All" unless everyone needs to know and try to keep email messages fairly brief.

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3. Consider the tone and content of e-mail messages, particularly, at busy or stressful times.
4. Remember that people other than the person to whom it's addressed may see your message
5. Don't use Emojis in a professional context.
6. Protect Privacy: Digital content has a very long life-time and can sometimes be retrieved even after it has been deleted. Be sensitive to the content of your emails and keep security and privacy in mind.
7. Do not type in all capital letters and if at all possible try to keep a positive tone. Do not send abusive or defamatory messages and be culture-sensitive in your emails.
8. Add a conversation closer whenever you can: By letting the recipient know that a response isn't needed, the email cycle doesn't continue on in perpetuity. Close with "No reply necessary," "Thank you again," "See you at the board meeting Tuesday" or "Please let me know if I may be of further assistance."
9. Emails are official documents and the contents covered by data ownership and protection. Do not access another person's account; send emails from somebody else's account or change content and pass it on.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

When sending emails from an ITS account, you are representing the Institute as much as if you were sending a letter on letter-headed paper. As an employee (and thus, an ambassador of the Institute) you have a duty to be aware that the content of your emails might bring discredit or embarrassment to the ITS.

Remember that legislation relating to written communication applies equally to email messages, including the laws relating to defamation, copyright, obscenity, fraudulent misrepresentation freedom of information, and wrongful discrimination.

Whenever possible, do not print out emails unless it is necessary to obtain a hard copy for record purposes.