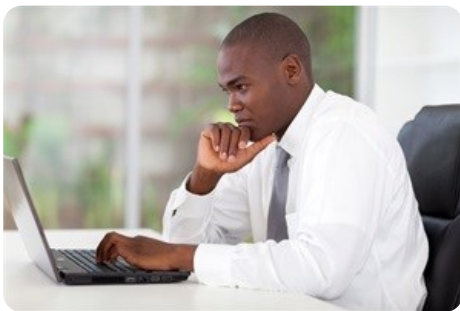


Improving netiquette, improving communication

Research shows employees send around 50-60 emails every day, but with this proliferation, comes the rise of embarrassing errors and small mistakes which can have professional consequences. Nine quick tips on netiquette can reduce these errors.

Do you need to email?

Email may be convenient, but that doesn't mean it's the best means of communication in every situation. It has to be relevant to be effective. Before you hit the keyboard, ask yourself if it's necessary to email at all – a phone call or a face-to-face discussion could suffice. Digital pollution is real – don't be responsible for the melting of another ice cap.



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If you have too many attachments, save everyone's time by using a managed document solution (MDS), which allows team members to access and share documents in one centralised location. Find a customisable solution designed for fast document storage and retrieval like Nashua's MDS. It can also be used to review, approve and update versions so the latest copies of documents are saved, instead of sending multiple emails during the reviewing process.

Subject must make sense

Make the subject line of your email clear – something the recipient actually cares about. People often decide whether or not to open an email based on the subject line alone. It's also important to edit the subject line when the theme changes within the thread. Examples of useful subject lines include 'meeting date changed' or 'proposal suggestions'. Choose one that lets readers know you're addressing their concerns upfront.

Avoid striking fear into the hearts of recipients with misleading subject lines (for example, 'client lost', when actually the client is simply asking for directions to your office). It's tempting to forward emails, but no one wants to see 'FW: FW: FW:'. Make the effort to change the subject line and content so it's relevant to the recipient.

Keep it professional

Even if you're sending out an informal email, it shouldn't affect the nature of the greeting. Don't use laid back colloquial expressions like 'hey you guys'. 'Hey' is an informal salutation – use 'Hi' or 'Hello' instead and keep a professional tone. Other no-go areas: 'sup', 'cheers', 'sweet' and 'dude'. It's also advisable not to shorten anyone's name unless you're certain the recipient prefers it.

Keep tabs on tone

Be cautious with humour – it gets lost in translation. In a professional email exchange, it's better to omit jokes. Something you think is hilarious might not be funny to someone else. The general rule is: when in doubt, leave it out. Start your email with a formal salutation, then state the purpose and convey the message. Separate text into paragraphs to present individual ideas and always conclude with a polite sign off.

A passive aggressive 'LOL' at the end of a serious or offensive message is just plain annoying. Avoid it at all costs.

Formatting faux pas

The format of an email can impact how the message is received. Using all caps is seen as shouting. Using only lowercase comes across as lazy. To get someone's attention, opt for bold text, but use it sparingly. Keep font size and colour consistent and simple.

There's nothing more frustrating than bad fonts and jarring spacing. Comic Sans and Times New Roman are just not okay. Overly wide spacing because you're a minimalist also doesn't go down well.

Avoid miscommunication by keeping content clear, organised and contextual. Long and badly structured sentences can confuse. Research shows people won't trawl through long, tedious emails and simply switch off. Use bullet points if necessary.

Double the eyes

The harsh reality is that consistent spelling mistakes do reflect incompetence. Don't rely on spellcheck to cover yourself – read emails a few times before sending, to check it's grammatically correct. If the reader can't understand what you've written, they may not take action. Auto-correct can mess with your emails too – a client's name, 'Brian' could easily switch to 'Brain'.

Nothing's confidential

Remember every email leaves a digital trail. It's safe to assume someone will see it – so don't send anything you don't want made public. Avoid petty or personal emails – you're better than that.

Stay on top

Delayed responses reflect disorganisation and apathy. Even if you're not able to attend to an email right away, reply with an acknowledgement – just clearly state you'll attend to the issue later. No one appreciates the 'I'm-late-to-the-party-and-I-know-the-problem's-been-solved-but-I'm-going-to-reply-a-week-later-to-look-like-I'm-on-top-of-things' approach either.

Think twice before hitting 'reply all'

No one wants to read emails with nothing to do with them. Refrain from hitting 'reply all' unless you think everyone on the list needs to be in the know. Although there might be exceptions, BCCing is pure deception. Use only for long lists of recipients who don't know each other.

Before clicking 'reply' and typing a quick response, make sure you've done all the above. It may take some practice to keep your emails professional and to the point, but you'll look more polished and organised in the long run.