

# Email Etiquette

## What is email etiquette?

Email etiquette refers to the code of conduct that guides behavior when writing or responding to emails. These principles of behavior can be modified to suit the intended audience and purpose, and are meant to project professionalism and respect.

## Why is email etiquette important?

The way you communicate reflects the type of employee (person) you are, including your work ethic and attention to detail. Companies may benefit from implementing best practices for email etiquette for the following reasons:

- **Professionalism:** Using proper email etiquette conveys a professional image of you or your employees and overall organization.
- **Efficiency:** Emails that adhere to etiquette are direct and concise, and they convey their message quickly.

## 16 email etiquette guidelines

When sending or replying to emails, here are some best practices for email etiquette to keep in mind:

### 1. Use standard formatting

Standard fonts, such as Times New Roman or Arial, as well as standard colors and sizes are appropriate for business emails. If you use bold or italics, never use them on more than one word or a string of words in a single email.

If you're copying and pasting text, make sure you clear the formatting before sending the email, as it could appear different than the rest of your text. To clear formatting, you can use "Command + \\" on a Mac or "Ctrl + Shift + N" on a PC.

### 2. Include a clear subject line

Title your email in a way that the recipient immediately knows what the message is about. For example, if you're emailing to follow up on a presentation, you might write, "*Quick question about your presentation.*"

### 3. Email from a professional email address

Use your company email address if possible. However, if you are self-employed or using a personal email address for work-related correspondence, make sure that your email address doesn't contain any words that would be considered unprofessional. If so, then consider setting up a work-only email address.

### 4. Use professional greetings

Choose a salutation that is appropriate for the relationship you have with the recipient. If you are sending an email to a coworker, a casual greeting such as "Hello" may be appropriate. If you're contacting someone for the first time or if they are a professional acquaintance, use a more formal greeting like "*Dear Sarah Atkins.*" It's recommended to use the person's name exactly as it's shown in their email signature line. In other words, don't assume that Jennifer goes by Jen unless you've seen them sign their emails that way.

### 5. Use an introduction

Depending on who you are emailing, it's best to introduce yourself by your first and last name, as well as the company you are representing, in the first few lines. This is especially important when emailing new contacts, clients, potential customers or employers. Let them know how you received their contact information.

**Example:** *"My name is Jan Washington. James Mack gave me your name and suggested I reach out to you regarding your amazing intern position."*

### 6. Be cautious with "Reply All"

The benefit of using "Reply all" is that you can respond to everyone at once to let them know an issue has been addressed. However, when in doubt, use "Reply" to avoid inundating a list of people with unnecessary emails.

### 7. Avoid using all caps

Use sentence case as you would for any formal communication, and avoid using all caps as it can read like you're screaming your intentions.

## 8. Double-check attachments

If you can copy and paste information into an email rather than attaching a document, do that. If not, let the recipient know in the body of your email that you have attached a document. It's also good etiquette to compress the documents or attach them in a zip file so it takes up less space in their inbox. In addition, you may want to consider uploading documents to a shared location and giving the recipient a link to access them.

And finally, pasting a lengthy URL into your email can look messy and take up valuable space. Use a link shortener to shorten the link or hyperlink text within the email.

## 9. Proofread

Proper spelling and grammar are important when sending business correspondence so always proofread your work before you hit send. Likewise, double-check the spelling of the recipient's name and email address. Sometimes autocorrect will alter names.

## 10. Don't use emojis

Unless the recipient has used emojis when communicating with you in the past, resist the temptation to use them yourself. They can come across as unprofessional in certain company cultures.

## 11. Reply within 24 hours

When someone emails you, replying within 24 hours, is common courtesy. If you have unintentionally passed this timeframe, express your apologies and politely explain the delay.

## 12. Keep your tone professional

Think carefully about your word choices in an email and how your intention may be interpreted. Use positive words, such as "opportunities" and "challenges" instead of "obstacles" and "limitations." Avoid negativity, sarcasm and adjectives that can cause you to sound overly emotional. Be careful when using humor too, as it can be misinterpreted.

## 13. Perfect your email signature

Less is generally more where email signatures are concerned. Your signature should typically include only your name, job title, company website and a phone number where you can be reached.

#### 14. Use Bcc appropriately

Bcc stands for blind carbon copy, which is similar to Cc except that the email recipients specified in the Bcc field do not appear in the header or to the recipients in the To or Cc fields. Using Bcc is good etiquette if you want to protect someone's email address from being exposed to others. For example, if you are emailing a group of subcontractors about a change in policy or procedure, it's considerate to Bcc everyone on the list. It's also a good idea to use if you're sending a weekly newsletter to clients who don't know each other and who would wish to keep their addresses private.

#### 15. Think before forwarding

A best practice for forwarding is to summarize what's being discussed so the recipient quickly knows what you need from them. It's also important to keep in mind that some emails are not intended to be forwarded and may contain private or sensitive information. Use caution when forwarding.

#### 16. Set informative out-of-office replies

If you plan to be out of the office for an extended period of time, set up an automated out-of-office reply to let people know you won't be able to respond to their emails until a specific date. Include a contact name if there is an urgent matter. Include "Out of Office" and the date in the subject line so recipients can quickly recognize that they've received an automated response. It's also helpful to include the first line in the message as: *"This is an automated message while I am out of the office."*

Make sure your email contains the following (when needed):

- Your First Name
- Your Middle Name
- Your Last Name
- Your Work Phone (If needed)
- Your Cell Phone (If needed)
- Your Home Email (If needed)
- Your Work Email (If needed)
- Your Work Address (If needed)
- Your Home Address (If needed)

Think of all the ways a person can respond back to you (This is very important if they don't know you.)