

Effective Email

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Purpose:

The purpose of this presentation is to teach you how to use email effectively in your professional and personal life. Email is a powerful and efficient tool for communicating quickly with people around the world. Email can send text, pictures, and video. It can also include attachments of any type of file. It is therefore a powerful tool for both students and researchers.

You probably already know a lot about email. This presentation will help you use it more effectively. All members of the Interactive Measurement Group are expected to use these techniques in their interactions with other lab members.

Reading Your Email

1. Read your email daily. You check your phone for messages every day when you get home, and so you should check for emails at least once a day as well. Many people check their email several times throughout the day. It is relatively common to receive urgent emails that require a timely response, and so it is probably beneficial to check your email twice a day.
2. Many of us check our emails 5 or 10 times a day, and some of us ask to be notified every time we receive an email. This reduces productivity and is psychologically unhealthy and it would be good if we could break this habit.
3. Use the Subject Lines to organize your emails. Deal with all emails on one topic before moving to the next topic. For example, you might deal with all the emails related to your Research Poster, then all the emails related to your English Composition class, and then all the emails related to your upcoming family reunion. Unless you are expecting a very important personal email, avoid dealing with personal emails first. Personal emails tend to be fun and can take up a lot of time. Get your work done first, and then reward yourself by dealing with your personal emails.
4. Avoid letting emails interrupt your work. Some people keep their email program open while they are at the computer, and then they reply to emails as they come in. This is acceptable if you have a lot of spare time. However, if you are busy, this is a bad way to use your time. You will deal with your emails more effectively and more quickly if you handle several related emails all at the same time, and you will do your other work more effectively if you do not allow yourself to be interrupted by emails. Therefore, minimize your email program (or the Internet browser you use for email) when you are working on something else. When you have finished what you are working on, open your email, reply to all the emails that are on one topic (your term poster for 498), reply to all the emails that are on another topic (your developmental term paper), etc. When you are finished with your email, minimize or close your email program again so you can work on something else.

Avoiding Looking Like Spam

Many email recipients receive a lot of spam. These messages waste your time, take up valuable space on your account, and can carry viruses. Many people therefore have automatic spam filters that re-route possible spam to another folder, or they simply delete emails that look like spam due to the address and subject line. To avoid creating emails that look like spam, consider the following:

1. Use a sensible email address, rather than an email address that looks like a random collection of letters and numbers. Barchard@unlv.nevada.edu is a good email address. K3j5l2d@yahoo.com is likely to be interpreted as spam.
2. Use a professional email address for work and school; if you have a fun email address (jumpingpancakes@yahoo.com), you should reserve this for friends.
3. Use a meaningful subject line. Emails with no subject line are likely to be interpreted as spam by both humans and automatic spam filters, and emails that do not have meaningful subject lines are also likely to be interpreted as spam. Included below is a section discussing effective subject lines in more detail.
4. Personalize your email. Address the recipient by name. Add content in the email that is specific to you and the recipient.

Examples:

Bad email: Hi there, I got that file you sent me. Thanks!

Good email: Hi Dad, I got the pictures of Whonnock Lake. Thanks!

5. If you suspect that someone might not have received your email, contact them using another method. If people are using an automatic spam filter, they may not check their spam folder to see if there are any emails there that are not spam. For most students and faculty, you can expect them to read your email within 24 hours and to reply to important or time-limited emails within 3 days. So if you send a time-limited email (e.g., about an assignment or appointment) or an important email (e.g., about a conference presentation), and you have not heard back within that time, you should resend the email. If you receive no response, contact them using another method. If it is important to know whether someone has read your email, you should ask them to send you a confirmation stating they have received your email. Later on, this idea is discussed in further detail. For emails that are less important or not time-limited, you will need to judge how long it might take the person to respond.

Avoiding Missing Important Emails Because of Your Spam Filter

1. If you use an automatic spam filter, you should check your spam folder occasionally to ensure that all those messages are spam. If you are expecting an email and do not receive it, it is especially important to check your spam folder.
2. Some spam filters allow you to provide a list of approved email addresses. If you use this type of list, make sure that you keep it up to date.

Useful Subject Lines

The subject line is an important part of your email. Think carefully about what your subject line should say. Here are some suggestions:

1. Use the subject line to indicate who you are. If you are emailing someone who may not recognize your email address, you can use the subject line to place your email in context.
Examples:
Subject: Psy 210 student (from 210 student to professor)
Subject: Psy 210 quiz 3 question (from 210 student to professor)
Subject: WPA conference presentation (from WPA attendee to a presenter)
Subject: MSCEIT (from one MSCEIT researcher to another MSCEIT researcher)
2. Use the subject line to help the reader categorize the content. If you contact the same person about topics that differ in content and importance, it is helpful to provide content information in the title. For example, the following emails might be sent from the same student to the

same professor over a period of a day or two. By having different subject lines, the recipient can reply to each email efficiently (when working on related topics) and can file each email in an appropriate location.

Examples:

Subject: Psy 210 question

Subject: Question about 496 assignment 3

Subject: Problem with data entry file! Help!

Subject: WPA conference registration “procedures”

Subject: Suggestion for lab orientation procedures

3. Use the subject line to indicate that this email belongs as part of an ongoing conversation. If you have been exchanging a series of emails with someone about a topic and if your new email is still on that same topic, it should use the same subject line.
4. Often, the easiest way to find someone’s email address is to reply to an email that they sent. However, if your email is not on the same topic as the email to which you are replying, give your email a new subject line that more accurately indicates the topic of your email.

Who to Send Your Email to and Who to CC

1. Often, we send emails to multiple people. It is important to be clear in your own mind and in your email about to whom the email is being addressed. Put the person to whom you are sending the email in the “TO” address line. If you are copying the email to other people so that they know what was said, put their email address in the “CC” address line. Double check that you have included all of the email addresses you need. It is relatively common to address an email to several people but to fail to send it to all of them.
2. At the top of your email, greet the recipients of the email by name. This is critical for a reader to know if he or she is the person to whom the email is addressed (as an indication to them that they should respond and act based upon it) or if he or she is simply receiving a copy of the email (so that he or she knows what is going on).
3. Do not send people emails (or copies of emails) that they do not need.
4. Do send the email (or a copy of the email) to everyone who should know about its contents. For example, when co-authoring a poster, paper, or class assignment, all emails to any group member should be sent to all group members. The only exception would be if you are deliberately trying to have a private conversation, such as when you want to discuss a problem with a team member, or when you want to discuss personal topics that are unrelated to the group project. When we have in-person conversations, it is often impossible to keep everyone involved in every conversation that occurs between any two team members, but with email, it is trivially easy to keep everyone informed. This prevents miscommunications and misunderstandings and makes the work more efficient.
5. Sometimes, we send an email to a group of several people, and we want all of them to read and respond to it. In that case, greet each of them by name (e.g., Dear John, Steve, and Mary,) or use a greeting that clearly includes them all (e.g., Dear Psy 210 students, Dear lab members,). If you are using a group-greeting, use a greeting that includes everyone to whom you are sending the email and no one else. For example, do not address the email to “lab members” if it is only going to some lab members.
6. Sometimes, we send an email to a random assortment of people we know (e.g., friends, family, teachers). This type of email is often sent to inform everyone that your email address (or physical address) has changed or to tell everyone about a major life event (e.g., marriage,

children being born). This is the only time when it is appropriate to use a general greeting (e.g., Hi everyone,). Even in such a case, you should never send an email to everyone in your address book. You should individually select the particular people to whom you are sending your email in order to avoid sending inappropriate emails to people with whom you are no longer in contact.

7. Sometimes, we want to send an identical email to several people, but we want each person to take the email seriously. In Kim's experience, if you send ONE general email to several people, even if you address each person by name, between 1 and 5% of people will respond. If you want responses from more people than that, you need to take the time to copy the email as many times as necessary and send individually addressed emails. In Kim's experience, 100% of people who know you will respond to requests that come in this form.

Respect the Work/Personal Distinction

What Email Address to Send To

1. Some people have multiple email addresses. Often, people who have multiple email addresses have designated purposes for some or all of those addresses. It is common, for example, to have separate addresses for work, school, and personal emails. In all cases, use the most appropriate email address, given the purpose of your email and your relationship to the receiver.
2. Do not send a personal email to someone's work email account, unless they use one account for both or have given you permission to email them at work.
3. Do not send work emails to a personal email account, unless they use one account for both or have given you permission to email them at their personal account.
4. Often, people will give you the appropriate email address for the purpose of your email. Teachers will give you the email address that they use for students. Work colleagues will give you their work email address. When you meet someone at a social event and they hand you a business card that has a work email address on it, they will often write their personal email address on back, to indicate that you should send your emails to that account instead.
5. Sometimes you will have to find someone's email address. You might find it by contacting the person's workplace, or by searching the Internet. Be aware of the fact that people have multiple email addresses and try to find the most appropriate address for your purpose. You might also find multiple email addresses because some of them are out of date: try to locate the current address that is appropriate to your purpose.

Respecting Time Away from Work

1. Some people choose to work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Most people do not. Respect people's choice to pick some hours and some days when they are not working. So, if you expect someone to reply to your email within three days, that is three *working* days, not three calendar days.
2. If you know someone's work schedule, respect it. If you know that someone works full time but you don't know exactly what hours they work, assume they will work roughly 8 hours per day. If you know that someone works part-time, assume they work every second day for about 4 hours. Do not expect the recipient to receive your email outside of work hours, or to take any work-related action based upon your email outside of work hours. Unless you know otherwise, assume the recipient does not work on the weekend.

3. If you know someone is on holiday, do not send them an email. That email will either interrupt their holiday or will be buried in their inbox when they return.

Protecting Yourself Against Viruses

1. Do not click on a link in an email unless you are completely sure it is safe. The address that is shown on the screen in your email does not have to be the address to where you will be taken, if you click on the link. It is safer to copy the http address by right-clicking the link, selecting "Copy Link Location," and pasting it into the address bar of your browser.
2. Do not open attachments unless you were expecting them. Even if you know the sender, unless you have good reason to believe that it is a valid attachment, do not open it.
3. Some email providers allow you to scan an attachment before you open it. For example, Yahoo! Mail does this. When you are expecting an attachment from someone you know, and you believe it is a valid attachment, you should scan it before opening it, if you can. Never open unexpected attachments, even if you scan them. Scanners are always necessarily one step behind the viruses, and thus scanning for viruses does not guarantee that an attachment is virus-free.
4. Even if the return address says that the email is from someone you know, it may not be. Many viruses pick email addresses from someone's mailbox and then send emails that look like they are from those addresses. You are more likely to get a virus in an email that claims to be from someone you know than from someone you do not know. To determine if the email was sent by the person it says it is from, consider: (a) does the content *sound* like something that person would write? (b) does the email include information about the recipient that is not general knowledge, and which is only true about a small number of people? (c) does the email include information about you that is not general knowledge?

For example, the following could be spam:

Hi there,

It was great getting together with you the other day! Here's the picture I told you about.

J.

The following is probably not spam:

Hi Kim,

It was great having dinner with you on Saturday. Tony's is now my favorite pizza place. Here's the picture of Casey that I told you about.

John

5. If you are not sure if an email, a link, or an attachment is legitimate, email the sender and ask them. Because the attachment might include a virus, it is safer if you do NOT include the suspicious email in your inquiry. Instead, phrase your question carefully so that they know why you are emailing them (to check if an email is legitimate) and can identify the email you are talking about if they really did send it.

Judicious Use of Attachments

1. Do not use an attachment if it is not necessary. Attachments take a lot of memory, and they can therefore slow down email programs, hog storage space, and fill up others' email accounts. Some email programs will reject emails that have attachments. Some people will refuse to open attachments, and some will even refuse to open emails that have attachments because of the danger of viruses. Therefore, do not use attachments unless you have to.

2. In your email, specifically state that there is an attachment, and say what is in the attachment. Address the recipient by name. This will help assure the recipient that you really did send the attachment and that it is not a virus.
3. It is relatively common to forget to send an attachment. The email says there is an attachment, but you forget to attach it. To avoid this, always upload an attachment as soon as you have mentioned that an attachment is included in the email.
4. It is not a big deal if you forgot to attach the attachment. Simply send a second email. Use the same subject in the subject line, but add the word “attachment”. Then say something such as, “Here is the current version of the poster. I forgot to attach it to my email. Let me know if you have any difficulty in downloading or reading the file.”
5. If you have a lot of storage space on your email server, you can use email attachments as a way of saving important files. Your email can be accessed from anywhere, which makes it convenient. For example, just before Kim leaves for a conference, she sometimes emails herself the PowerPoint slides for the posters she is presenting. If the poster gets lost (or the person who was supposed to bring the poster does not show up), she can get the poster from her email and then reprint it. By the way, Gmail allows a lot of storage space (over 7,280 MB, as of Spring 2009) and allows you to organize emails by categories.
6. If you (or your recipient) do not have a lot of storage space on your email program, do not save emails that have attachments. Instead, put the content of your email in one email, and put the attachment in the NEXT email. In the first email, say, “I wanted to talk to you about our poster. In the first paragraph... In the second paragraph... etc. In the next email, I will send you the current version of the poster. Let me know if you have any difficulty in receiving or reading the file.” In the second email, say, “Here is the current version of the poster. Let me know if you have any difficulty in downloading or reading the file.”
7. Remember that the recipient may not have the same software that you have. If you know you will be sending someone a file in the future, find out what software they use. For example, you might use Word 2007, but they use Word 2003 or WordPerfect. If they do use different software, save the file in a format that they will be able to read. And *always* ask the recipient to confirm that they were able to download and read the file.

Correcting Procedural Errors

1. Sometimes, you will accidentally send an email that has no subject line. Just resend the identical email, with the intended subject line. The easiest way to get the same content into your new email is to forward the email you just sent, but edit it so that they cannot see that it has been forwarded. Another option is to copy and paste the content. People often receive duplicate emails, and so you don’t need to explain what happened or apologize for it.
2. Sometimes, you will forget to include the email address of one of intended recipients. This is common: don’t stress about it and don’t waste anyone’s time with a long apology. Simply forward the old email to the additional recipient, CCing the previous recipients, and include a short note saying something like “Jane, I meant to send you the attached email about XXX.”
3. Sometimes, you will forget the attachment. This is REALLY common. Forward your previous email to them, and attach the attachment. Change the subject line, so that it has the same subject line as before, but also says “the attachment”. For example, if the previous subject line was “Assignment 2”, the new subject line is “Assignment 2 – the attachment”.

Useful Content

History

1. If your email is a part of an on-going conversation, include the history. Some email programs (e.g., Gmail) make it easy for the user to trace the history of a series of email, just from looking at the current email. However, most email programs do not have this function, and you should not assume that your recipient has (or knows how to use) this function. Always include the history yourself. Often you can use “Reply with History”.
2. If your email program does not allow you to include the history of your email conversation, be sure to include enough information in your current email so that the reader knows what you are replying to.

Examples:

Bad email: Hi Kim, That time works great for me. See you then.

Good email: Hi Kim, Yes, I can meet you at 4:30 on Thursday Oct 21 to talk about our class project. See you then.

Salutations

1. Email is a cross between formal, written letters and informal, spoken conversation. In formal, written letters, we use salutations, such as “Dear Dr. Smith,” at the top of EVERY letter. In informal, spoken conversation, we do not repeat the person’s name every time we speak. Therefore, some emails have formal salutations (e.g., Dear Dr. Smith), some have informal salutations (e.g., “Hi,” or “Susan,”) and some have no salutation. In every email you send, be aware if you are sending a formal letter or having an informal conversation.
2. If you are initiating a new email (rather than replying to something that the other person sent you), you should ALWAYS include that person’s name in your salutation. This avoids confusion because the recipient might not be sure that you are intending to direct this email to him or her. If you omit the salutation, you are implying that you are continuing an ongoing conversation.
3. When you are emailing people who you do not know (e.g., professors whose classes you want to take or with whom you want to go to graduate school), use a formal salutation until you are invited to use an informal salutation. For example, use “Dr. Smith” until that person replies and signs their email “Jane” or “J”. If they sign their name “Jane Smith”, continue to address them as “Dr. Smith”.

Sender Information

1. Clearly indicate who is sending the email. If you are in regular email correspondence with a person, it is sufficient to sign the email at the bottom. If you are emailing someone who you do not regularly email, you should introduce yourself at the beginning of the email. For example, “My name is Kim Barchard and I am a faculty member at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.”
2. If the email is being sent by multiple people or on behalf of multiple people, indicate this in the content of the email. Use actual names, rather than words like “we” and “us”. You can sign the email with everyone’s names if everyone helped write the actual content of the email. If one person is sending an email on behalf of a group, it can be signed with the name of the sender, followed by “on behalf of” and then list the group (e.g., Kim Barchard, on behalf of the Admissions Committee). Finally, you can include the names of the senders in the text. For example, “I am sitting here with Danee and we were discussing your project.

We suggest....”, or “The Admissions Committee met today to discuss the date of interview day. We decided....”

Clarity

1. Email is an impoverished communication system; we cannot hear the other person’s tone of voice or see their non-verbal gestures and facial expressions. Therefore, word-choice and sentence structure are much more important than in spoken communication. As well, miscommunications are easy and frequent, and if your reader is in a bad mood because they are stressed out, tired, or overworked (which describes a lot of us a lot of the time), they are likely to misinterpret your words in a pessimistic way rather than in an optimistic way. Therefore, make sure that your emails are clear.
2. Be concise and to the point. Do not ramble or repeat yourself. Your recipient almost certainly has too many emails that need to be read, and they will appreciate your brevity. However, do not leave out any important material. In particular, do not make your email so brief that you are rude. See the section below on friendly words.
3. Spell-check your emails before you send them. This improves clarity and is a part of common courtesy. It shows the recipients that you are thinking about them and their experience while they are reading your email.
4. Reread your emails before you send them. You will catch a lot of your own mistakes, and you will think of ways that you can phrase things more clearly.
5. If there is someone else around who can proofread your email before you send it, ask them to. For example, all students who have watched Kim send an email will recall that she reads the email out loud while she writes it and then asks the other people in the room if they have any suggestions for improvement.

Keeping Everyone Informed

1. If you are working with one or more people on a project, it is important to keep everyone informed. Email is good for this, because you can CC all team-related emails to all team members, so that everyone is kept fully informed.
2. Unless all team members do all work together (either in person or on the phone), it is critical that you make a concerted effort to make sure everyone know what is going on. If two or more team members meet without the other team members, send them an email update within a few hours of the meeting.
3. Sometimes, we work on a project individually. It is critical that all team members know what each other did individually, to avoid duplicating each others’ work, and so that everyone can give each other credit for their efforts. If you won’t have an in-person or phone meeting that involves all team members very soon, send an email update to let everyone know what you did.
4. Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we are unable to follow through on our commitments. When we are working in a team, it is essential that we let all team members know immediately if we won’t be able to do work we promised them. This includes attending a meeting, doing an assignment, going to a conference. It doesn’t matter if it’s big or small, we need to let team members know if we can’t follow through. If a personal or health crisis occurs, a short functional email is sufficient. Team members are very lenient and understanding when tragedy hits. For example, the following email would usually be sufficient “Family emergency. Not sure when I’ll be back. Sorry about this.” On the other

hand, if it isn't some kind of emergency, a more detailed explanation and apology is necessary, but it must still be sent as soon as you know you won't be able to follow through on your commitment. Don't put it off, though, just because you are embarrassed. The faster you let your team members know, the less annoyed they will be.

Making up for the Loss of Non-verbal Communication: Friendly Words

Email communication consists almost entirely of written words. Non-verbal gestures, tone of voice, and facial expressions are all missing. Researchers have estimated that 60% of spoken communication is non-verbal, and when we send emails, we are missing all of that. This creates challenges for being clear and for being friendly. Clarity is important for obvious reasons. Friendliness is important because it helps prevent our recipients from feeling attacked and getting defensive and is critical to building and maintaining trust. In the absence of friendly non-verbal communication, the statement "I read your paper" is ambiguous. The recipient does not know if we liked the paper or not, which they would know if they were talking to us in person, based upon our tone of voice, posture, facial expression, etc. So, when we use email, we need to create substitutes for non-verbal communication. In face-to-face communication, people often know we are friendly based upon non-verbal communication. In email, we need to add friendly words to substitute.

1. Begin your email with a friendly gesture. Before starting the main email discussion, include introductory phrases that either compliment or thank the recipient or wish the recipient well. For example, if you have not communicated with the person for a while, you might start with, "I hope you had a good weekend" or "I hope your semester is going well". If you are sending a response email, you might start with something such as, "Thank you for your feedback", "I enjoyed reading the paper you sent me", or "I enjoyed the class discussion yesterday about ferret social structure". These friendly gestures add a lot to the positive tone of the email. They are the equivalent of saying "How are you?" at the beginning of a conversation. Even the phrase "How are you?" can be used in an email.
2. You can also end your email with well wishes. These include phrases such as, "Have a great weekend" and "Good luck with the paper". In general, though, it is more important to include friendly gestures at the beginning of the email rather than at the end because they influence how the recipient will interpret the main body of the email.
3. Avoid over-saturating your emails with friendly gestures. Usually, one sentence at the beginning and one at the end is the most that is needed or desired.
4. Regardless of whether you are writing a formal or informal letter, always end your email with a valediction. A valediction is an expression used to say "goodbye" at the end of a letter. Some good valedictions include the following: Best regards, Sincerely, Have a nice day, etc. Sometimes a friendly gesture, such as, "I hope you have a good weekend" can serve as a valediction as well. The only time you can omit valedictions is when your emails are part of an on-going informal conversation, in which you are no longer including greetings to indicate who the recipient is and in which you might not even be signing the emails. For example: (1) "Hi Jan, want to go for coffee after class? Cheers, Steve." (2) "Yeah, that would be great." (3) "Okay, I'll meet you in the hallway." If in doubt, keep the valediction: it's better to be unnecessarily friendly than to be accidentally rude.
5. Emails also require extra effort to be clear. Because emails consist almost entirely of written words, and because you are not talking to the recipient in real-time, it is more common for there to be misunderstandings. Therefore, it is important that you encourage your recipients

to ask you questions. One of the best ways to do this is to indicate that you want to help or that you want feedback. Two useful phrases are the following: “Let me know if there is anything else I can do to help” and “Let me know if you have any questions or concerns”. These phrases also make your email seem friendlier, even when the email itself is entirely clear.

Making up for the Loss of Non-verbal Communication: Emotions and Non-Verbal Communication

1. It is sometimes useful to add explicit substitutions for non-verbal communication. These come in two forms.

The first is an explicit statement of a non-verbal communication signal. The following are some examples: “Your story made me laugh”, “<smile>”, and “I am at a loss for words”. People sometimes use emoticons (such as a smiley face) to indicate emotions. Be careful of using emoticons because these faces do not have universal interpretations. In informal emails with people you know well, a simple smiley face may be okay. However, never use emoticons in professional emails because they are informal and may be misinterpreted.

The second type of substitute for non-verbal communication is an explicit statement of an emotion. People use non-verbal communication to infer emotions, and when non-verbal communication is missing, it is much harder for someone to know what you feel. To avoid ambiguity and confusion, you can explicitly state how you feel. The following are some examples: “I enjoyed reading your paper”, “I am sad to hear that the download didn’t work”, “I am stressed out because of the deadline”, and “I am disappointed that you weren’t able to do the work”.

If you chose to state your emotions explicitly, be careful. In face-to-face communication, people rarely state their emotions explicitly. Therefore, when you state them in an email, the recipient will interpret your emotions as being very strong. When expressing negative emotions, be particularly careful; chose a milder word than you would when talking face to face. Because the recipient is not right in front of us, it’s sometimes hard to remember that we are talking *to them*; we sometimes focus only on our own emotions without realizing the impact we will have on the reader. Make sure you don’t say something you would regret! The statement “I am angry at you” might be true and might be clear and might get you fired.

2. In face-to-face communication, we often say something in words that is different from what we convey non-verbally. Sometimes we insult someone in jest, and we count on them to recognize that it is a joke. Sometimes we agree to do a task that we really don’t want to do, and we count the listener to recognize our discomfort. This does not happen in email. Be aware of what the reader will think if they only have your words as guidance.
3. The formatting and appearance of your email will convey non-verbal information to the recipient. If you use the default settings for your email (e.g., black words on a white background), this will likely be interpreted as a lack of any specific emotional content. If you modified the appearance of your email, this will influence the interpretation of the words in your email. If the writing or background is colored or patterned, if an unusual font is used, if pictures are included, these will change interpretation. Be sure that the impression conveyed by the appearance matches the content of the email.

Making up for the Loss of Non-verbal Communication: Empathy

1. Often, it is useful to acknowledge the emotions felt by the recipient. When a person tells us about an emotional situation in person, they can sense our empathy by our body language. In email, they cannot tell we are feeling empathic. It is often useful to explicitly indicate that we understand what emotions the other person is feeling.
2. One way to acknowledge another's experience is to reflect what they said. For example, "You mentioned you are having trouble downloading the file."
3. Another way to acknowledge another's experience is to explicitly state what emotion you think they are feeling. For example, "This is the third time you've emailed me about downloading the file. You must be getting frustrated by now. I appreciate your patience with me while I try to help you." Be careful with explicit statements about other's emotions. We rarely make these statements in person, and so the fact that we are stating them explicitly will mean that they will usually be interpreted as strong emotions. Perhaps chose a milder emotion word than you think the person is actually feeling. For example, say "frustrated" rather than "furious".
4. A third way to acknowledge another's experience is to state your own reaction to the event or a similar event. For example, if the event is a shared experience, you might say something like "I know you must be feeling terrible today. I saw the news about the hurricane last night and I was just terrified – my sister and her two kids live in New Orleans. I heard from them late last night, and I was so relieved. I know you have family there too. I hope they are okay." If the event is not shared, you can relate your reaction to a similar event. For example, "I'm sorry to hear your car isn't working. The last time that happened to me, I was so frustrated. It was driving along just fine and then it just stopped! It took me hours to get home and cost hundreds of dollars to fix. I hope your experience isn't as bad as mine was. Let me know if there is anything I can do to help." Be careful when relating your own experiences. Avoid one-up-manship, in which you seem to be minimizing someone else's suffering because you had a worse experience than they did.
5. Finally, the speed of your reply is an indicator of how sincere you are in your response. If someone tells you that something terrible happened, and you reply immediately, that will be perceived as a heart-felt response. If the reply comes days or weeks later, it may be interpreted as a calculated reply, and not sincerely. If your response is delayed, it is helpful to indicate explicitly that you responded as soon as you heard about it. For example, "Dear Dan, I got behind on my email last week and I just finally read your note about your brother. I'm so sorry to hear about your loss. Let me know if there is anything I can do to help. Warm regards, Kim."
6. Often, emotional content will appear in the middle of an instrumental email. For example, someone might say "I can't come to the meeting next week. My brother died and I will be attending his funeral." To avoid minimizing the significance of the emotional content, it is often helpful to send separate replies regarding the emotional event and the instrumental purpose of the email. For example, the following email seems to minimize the significance of the loss: "Hi Dan. I'm sorry to hear your brother died. Can we meet the week you get back, Oct 14 – 18? Best regards, Kim." Creating separate emails for the emotion content and the instrumental content also allows the instrumental content to be included as history in an on-going series of emails about a topic, without regularly reminding the person of the emotional event in the future and without violating their privacy if the series of emails is shared with others in the future. Additionally, it can be helpful to send the emails at different times. Reply first to the emotional content. If possible, reply immediately. To indicate that

the emotional well-being of the recipient is the most important thing on your mind, delay sending the instrumental email. A delay of just a few minutes may be enough to make the person feel like they were really heard. Another option is to explicitly state that the instrumental content of the email is not important compared to the emotional content. For example “Hi Dan. I’m so sorry to hear your brother died. Don’t worry about the project. We can talk about that after you get back. Nothing is as important as family. Have a safe trip. All my best, Kim.”

Making up for the Loss of Non-verbal Communication: Politeness to Those with Higher Status

1. When we meet with someone face-to-face, we can indicate that we acknowledge that the person we are talking to has authority or social status, using our posture, the direction we face, our gestures, etc. When we meet with someone face-to-face or talk to them on the phone, we can also acknowledge someone’s higher authority by the tone of our voice, how quickly we talk, etc. All of these non-verbal cues are lost in text-only emails. To receive a favorable response from the recipient, we must add in substitutes.
2. Begin emails with formal salutations (Dear Dr. Barchard). Do not use an informal form of address (Hi Kim) until the higher-status recipient has signed their email with an informal version of their name.
3. Sign your email formally (Best Regards, Sincerely, Thank you). Do not use an informal signature (Best, Thanks,) until the higher-status person does.
4. Use complete sentences, with proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Many email programs do not have spelling and grammar checkers. You may wish to draft your email in a Word processing program, and then copy the final content into your email program.
5. Use default settings for format (font color and style, background color, etc) or equally formal alternatives. Do not include a pink background with yellow flowers.
6. If you are the person of higher status and you are sending an email to someone of lower status, be aware that they will take their cues from you. For example, they usually will not address you informally until you give them permission to do so by signing your email informally. If you wish to keep the exchange formal, then you must consistently use formal salutations, signatures, and style.
7. If you are the person of higher status, you can indicate this in your formatting by skillfully using the formatting options available in your email program to create a formal appearance. For example, including using a cream-colored background with a company logo and digital signature can indicate both that the email is formal and that the sender is in a position of power or authority. Be careful, though: inexperienced use of formatting options will reduce your credibility.

Time and Location

Emails can be sent and read from anywhere, at any time.

1. Give actual dates (March 3) or days (Wednesday), rather than using a term such as “yesterday”, “today”, or “tomorrow”. Your recipient may not read your email on the day that you send it, and words such as, “yesterday,” “today,” “tomorrow,” and “next weekend” can become ambiguous.
2. Give precise times. Do not say “right now”, “an hour from now”, or “an hour ago”. Instead, say “now, at 2pm” or “at 3pm”.

3. Include specific references to locations (my office, Room 314 in the McDonalds building) rather than locations that are based upon the location of the sender or receiver (here, there).
4. If the time or location of either the sender or the receiver is relevant, include that information in the email. Emails often have a date and time stamp on them. Senders might mistakenly think that the receiver will therefore know when the email was sent. The date and time stamp is not a reliable indicator of when the email was sent. Kim thinks that the date and time stamp might be when the email was received by the recipient's server. It could also be when the email was received by the sender's server. It is unlikely to be when the email was sent by the sender. And regardless of what the date and time stamp say, the recipient is unlikely to read them or note their importance. To indicate the time at which the email was sent, include statements like "I just got your email. It's midnight now and I need to get to bed. I'll take care of this in the morning." To indicate the time at which the email is likely to be received, include statements like "I'm assuming you will get this email sometime on Thursday, in which case I'm hoping you will do this work on Friday and get back to me by Friday night. Please email me back immediately to confirm you got this email and will be able to get this work done by Friday night. If I do not hear from you by the end of Thursday, I will assume you haven't gotten my email yet, and I will instead do the work myself on Friday."

When to Expect a Reply and What to do if You Don't Receive It

1. How quickly someone will reply depends upon the topic of the email and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. For some recipients and some topics, you may be expecting an email back the same day, but for others, you shouldn't expect to hear back for a couple of weeks. For example, I personally expect emails back the next day from my professional associates and the students I work with regularly, but if the email topic isn't urgent, I realize it may take them two or three days. On the other hand, when I am emailing professionals who do not know me, I don't expect a reply for a couple of weeks.
2. If you need a reply by a certain date, you should put this in the Subject Line, in addition to the topic of the email. If the reply is unreasonable, given the topic of the email and your relationship to the sender, acknowledge this in your email, and apologize for your request for a quick reply. Acknowledge that the recipient might not be able to make your unreasonable deadline.
3. Emails sometimes disappear. Sometimes they start at your computer and your server, and they simply never arrive at their intended destination. If you do not receive a reply, assume that the technology failed, rather than assuming that the person chose not to answer you.
4. If you do not receive a reply within the expected time-frame, forward your previous email to the person, and at the top of the email, say, "I'm not sure if you got this email, since I didn't hear back from you. So I thought I'd send you my email again just to be sure."
5. It will sometimes turn out that the person failed to reply to an email that they received. This is very common. You should forgive them this. Many people are overwhelmed with dozens or hundreds of emails per day. Under these circumstances, it is inevitable that some emails will be overlooked, misfiled, or accidentally deleted. When a person fails to reply to an email, this is therefore a small oversight, like speeding by 2 miles per hour. It does not require an explanation (she must not like me anymore) or a punishment (I'll never talk to her again). If you do not receive a reply within the time-frame expected, email again. If it turns out it was their fault, forgive them.

6. If your second attempt to contact a person using a certain email address fails, after allowing sufficient time for a reply giving the content of the email and your relationship to the recipient, then try another email address (perhaps the one you had was out of date) or another mode of communication (phone, paper-letter).

Ask for reply

1. If the email you are sending is important, ask for a reply. You can say “please email me back to let me know that you got this email” or “let me know what you think of these ideas”.
2. Some email programs also have features that allow you to know when an email was received by the recipient’s computer or when the email itself was opened by the recipient. However, some people scan emails without reading them, and so you should not rely entirely upon these automated notifications.

Acknowledging Receipt

1. If someone sends you something, it is useful to acknowledge you got it. A quick email is sufficient. For a formal email, you might say “Dear Kim, I got the file. Thanks!” or “Dear Dr. Barchard, Thank you for sending me your paper. Warm regards, John.” For an informal email, you might say “Got it.” or “Thanks!”

Urgent Emails

1. **I recommend that you send no more than one URGENT email per person per year.**
When sending an URGENT email that requires an IMMEDIATE response, put “URGENT” in the subject line and indicate the urgency of the email using whatever features your email program allows (my Lotus Notes allows me to say that an email is High Priority, for example). Do not say an email is URGENT unless it is. Try to arrange your life so that you have few catastrophes, by planning things out in advance. Remember that your bad planning is not anyone else’s emergency.
2. If you reply to an URGENT email and the reply is not URGENT, do not include the word URGENT in the subject line.
3. Be careful how you phrase your urgent emails. Avoid being authoritarian and rude, regardless of whether the recipient is your subordinate, peer, or supervisor. Explain why something needs to be done by a certain time. Include begging words such as “please”, “I am hoping that you can”, “I need to ask you if you can”, “I want to ask for your help”, “I am hoping you can help me”, “I apologize for asking you on such short notice”. End your email by offering the person a way of turning you down. For example, “please email me back to confirm you can do this work by noon tomorrow or to let me know that I will need to do the work myself.”

How to Set a Meeting between two people

1. When you are setting meetings by email, every email you send should contain useful scheduling information.

Examples:

Bad email: Hi Jane, I would like to meet to talk about our project. When are you available?

Good email: Hi Jane, I would like to meet to talk about our project. The best days for me next week are Tuesday (anytime), Wednesday (anytime), and Thursday (before 2:30). If

- it fits in your schedule, I'd prefer noon on Thursday, but if that doesn't work, any of the other times would be fine. What time works best for you?
2. You should be able to schedule a meeting in three emails.
 1. Jane's first email: available times.
 2. John's reply email: suggest specific time.
 3. Jane's reply email: confirm time.
 3. To make this work, the first email should include a lot of available times. It can optionally suggest a specific time if you have a time preference. The second email should give one specific time.
 4. Finally, do not give approximate times. Do not say "around 10" or "10ish". Give a specific time, so that everyone knows when your meeting is. If everyone concerned is flexible about the time, be very specific about that. Say something, such as the following: "I will expect you to arrive sometime between 10:00 and 10:30".

How to Set a Meeting between several people

1. When you need to set a meeting that involves several people, you should be able to do this in four emails.
 1. The organizer's first email, asking for all of the times when it is physically possible for each person to meet with the group, along with their top three (or five) preferred times
 2. The replies from each attendee
 3. The organizer's second email, stating the time and location of the meeting
 4. Confirmation emails from each attendee
2. When you need to set a meeting between a group and another person, you should be able to do this in three emails
 1. The team requests a meeting with the other person. This email lists all the times when it is physically possible for EACH team member to meet with the other person, along with the team's top three preferred times. For example:

Hi Kim,

We'd like to meet with you to polish our submission materials for WPA. Here's when each of us is available:

Person A: Tuesday 8am - 10pm, Wed 1 -3pm

Person B: Tuesday 3 - 4pm, Fri 8am - 3pm

Person C: Tuesday 3 - 6 pm, Wed 1 - 5pm, Fri 8 - 10am

Our top three preferred times to meet with you are:

1. Tuesday 3 -4 pm, Person A, B, and C can all attend
2. Friday, 8 - 10am, Person B and C can attend
3. Tuesday 4 - 6pm, Person A and C can attend

I hope one of these times works for you, but if not, you have our complete schedules of available times.

Warm regards,

2. The other person replies, giving the time of the meeting
3. The team members who will be attending the meeting confirm that they will attend.

How to Ask for Help

1. If you are asking someone to do something, address them by name. Personalize the email to them, so that they know why you are asking them instead of someone else. If you ask for help from several people, send each person a separate, personalized email. Each person should feel like they have been carefully selected based upon their qualifications and that they are your first choice for someone to help them.
2. Ask them to do something specific. Do not, for example, simply tell someone about a problem. If you know what they need to do, ask them to do it. For example, you might write, “Jason says he will miss all of the lab meetings. I’m hoping you can contact him to talk about this issue.”
3. If you don’t know what the recipient needs to do, state this explicitly. For example, you might write, “The computer in the testing room won’t turn on. I have let the study administrators know. There are three scheduled appointments, two of which can move to the other room. The third appointment has now been cancelled and an email was sent to the participant. I don’t know what to do about the computer. What would you like me to do?”

How to Approach a Potential Graduate School Mentor

1. Identify people you might like to do research with during graduate school.
2. Read at least 3 of their papers to learn more about their research and ensure that they are a good match for you.
3. Email them 6 – 12 months BEFORE you submit your application to graduate school. The goal is to develop a correspondence and a relationship with your potential mentor. In your first email
 - a. Tell them which papers you’ve read
 - b. If possible, make a comment or ask a question about something in those papers
 - c. Briefly describe your research experiences (in both our lab and any other labs), so that the person knows you are prepared for graduate school.
 - d. Ask if they are taking students for the upcoming year.

Asking Questions

1. To ensure that the recipient notices your question, you may want to highlight it somehow. You can bold it, put it in a different color, or just put it on a new line.
2. If you ask multiple questions spread throughout your email, the person may reply by only answering the question that comes at the end of your email. Therefore, you need to organize your email in a way that encourages the reader to answer all of your questions. You have two options. You can leave space after each question for the person to insert their answer (i.e., put your questions as the last sentences of each paragraph), or you can summarize your questions again at the end of your email. Kim often does both.

Answering Questions

1. In your answer, always include the question or use full sentences so that the reader is reminded about what the question was. If you are replying to an email with a series of questions, there are three ways to organize your reply.

- a. First, you can write complete answers to each question in your own email. A complete answer is one that can be read on its own, without the need to reread the question. This method works well.

Example:

Question: Can you meet me at 5:00 on Thursday?

Incomplete answer: Yes (You need to see the question in order to make sense of the answer)

Complete answer: Yes, I can meet you at 5:00 on Thursday.

As long as you provide complete answers to each question, this method works well.

- b. Second, you can provide incomplete answers. This method does not work well, even if you try to make up for it by numbering your answers to match the numbers of the original questions. When Kim has received emails like this, she had to reorganize the emails so that the answers came right after the questions. This is a very bad method of answering multiple questions.
- c. Third, you can start your email by saying, "My replies are given in CAPS below." Then scroll through their email and insert your answers after each of their questions. This method works well because the incomplete answers come after each of the questions. However, if your reply includes more questions, their reply can become cumbersome and difficult to read.

Next Actions

1. Every email should include a next action. It should be clear who will do what next. There are several ways to indicate this. For example, you might ask a question. In that case, the recipient is expected to answer it. Or you might ask the recipient to do something. In that case, the recipient should reply to say that they have done it or that they will do it or should explain why they can't do it and offer an alternative. Another way to say this is that every email should move a project forward.
2. For example, if Jane emails Susan to suggest that they break a paragraph into two, Susan should NOT simply reply "I don't think we should do that." Susan should go on to offer an alternative way to solve the problem.
3. As another example, if Steve discovers a conflict in the schedule, his email to his teammates should NOT simply point out the problem. His email should either propose solutions that his teammates can endorse or reject, or he should explicitly say that he doesn't know what to do about the scheduling conflict and he is hoping they can offer suggestions.

Formatting

1. The recipient of your email usually will not be using the same email program as you do, and the same recipient may access their email through several different programs. Therefore, you need to use formatting that will work in all email programs. The general rule is to keep it simple.
2. Indenting may not work properly. Separate paragraphs with an extra line.
3. Tables may not work properly. I use tabs instead, but I'm not sure if they always look right on the recipients' computers.
4. AVOID making your professional emails look pretty. It is now possible to use pictures or wallpapers as background, fancy scrolling fonts, pictures, and animations. These are NOT

considered professional at this time and should be avoided in your school and work emails. Judicious use of color is acceptable. For informal emails, adapt your formatting to the receiver and to the email program they are likely to use (e.g., some of your friends may check email on the cell phones).

Finding a Previous Email

1. Most email servers will allow you to save old emails. This can be incredibly useful, because it is another way of organizing and saving conversations about work, school, and your personal life.
2. Organize your previous emails in a way that makes sense to you. Usually, this involves creating folders that group your emails by topic. However, some recent email programs instead encourage users to organize emails by “threads”. A thread is a series of emails where one email is a reply to the previous email, back through time.
3. Many email programs allow you to “flag” a selected email. You can use these flags in any way you want: these might be important emails or emails that you have not replied to completely.
4. If you cannot find an email by using the previous methods, most email programs have a method of searching your previous emails. The search functions can be very powerful, allowing you to search by recipient, topic, date, or content.

Forwarding

It is often useful to forward an email to another person. The exact email that was sent to you is then appended at the end of your email. This can prevent confusion and ambiguity. Here are some guidelines regarding forwarding:

1. Assume that any email you write will be forwarded to your supervisor, your subordinates, your co-workers, and all your friends. Because it is so easy for someone to forward your email, sometimes someone will forward an email that you were not expecting to be forwarded. Therefore, be careful about what you say in your emails. Always try to be professional, and do not say unforgivable or embarrassing things, especially regarding people with whom you work. If some content should be kept confidential, state this explicitly in your email.
2. When you are forwarding someone else's email, consider whether the information (or the specific way they phrased the information) should be considered confidential or private (even if they did not say so). If so, you have three options. First, you can forward the email, but delete the content that the recipient does not need or should not have access to. This is an acceptable thing to do. Second, you could change the wording in the “forwarded” part of the email, so that it looks like the person wrote something different than what they actually wrote. Do NOT do this. This would be misquoting that person. Third, you could choose NOT to FORWARD the email. If you cannot retain the meaning of the original email by just deleting the material that should not be forward, then do not forward the email. Instead, in your email, rephrase what the other person said. This is commonly done and is completely acceptable.
3. When you are forwarding someone else's email, be sure that your own email is coherent and understandable without reading the forwarded email and that your email specifically refers to the forwarded email so that the reader knows they should keep reading after your email ends.

Forwarding instead of Copying

Sometimes we want to send identical (or nearly identical emails) to multiple people. However, our email programs sometimes will NOT let us copy the previous email. In that case, we can forward the previous email, and then edit it to make it look like it was an original email, written specifically for that one person.

1. When emails are forwarded, the email program often draws lines or arrows next to the forwarded text, to show it was forwarded. You need to carefully erase all traces of that. Depending upon your email program, there's different ways of doing this. If necessary, forward emails to yourself to prove your technique works.
2. If the purpose of your email is to forward another email, then you should leave in all the proof that the email has been forwarded. But if you are forwarding another email as a way of sending the same email to multiple people (one at a time), you should erase all evidence that you forwarded that email. This way, the recipient will think that they are the only recipient - that you hand-crafted an email for them, that you care about them. If you leave in evidence that you forwarded the email, they may feel slighted, that you didn't really care about them. When you erase evidence of forwarding, they may recognize that they are receiving a form letter, but they will still feel better if you don't leave a mess in the letter. It's like taking the time to write neatly so that someone can read what you are writing - it shows you care about the reader.

Suggestions

If you have other suggestions about the effective use of email or if you can improve upon any of the suggestions given here, email your suggestions to Kim Barchard at barchard@unlv.edu

Helpful Links

Here is a helpful website that has a 21-day course on email. Please complete this workshop. You will only be able to do a lesson a day, for 21 days.

<http://www.reviveyourinbox.com/>

Other useful websites:

<http://www.getelastic.com/email-design-for-gmail/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsMSqhMlfao>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEybfVWawII>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLZjii7Eblw>