Effective Email

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Effective Email

Purpose

This presentation will teach you how to use email effectively in your professional and personal life. All members of the Interactive Measurement Group are expected to use these techniques in their interactions with other lab members.

Part 1: First Steps

Reading Your Email

1. Read your email daily. It is relatively common to receive urgent emails that require a timely response, and so it is beneficial to check your email twice a day.

2. Some of us ask to be notified every time we receive an email. This reduces productivity and is psychologically unhealthy.

3. Use the Subject Lines to organize your emails. Deal with all emails on one topic before moving to the next topic. Answer emails by level of importance (answer urgent work or school emails before fun personal ones).

4. Avoid letting emails interrupt your work. Answering emails as they come is acceptable if you have the spare time, however, if you are busy, this is a bad way to use your time. you will do your other work more effectively if you do not allow yourself to be interrupted by emails. Therefore, minimize your email when you are working on something else until you have finished .When you are finished with your email, minimize or close it again so you can work on something else.

Part 2: Preparing to Send Your Email

What Email Address to Send To

1. Some people have multiple email addresses. 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.

3. Do not send work emails to a personal email account.

4. Often, people will give you the appropriate email address for the purpose of your email. Use the email that the person has given you.

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 You might also find multiple email addresses because some of them are out of date: try to locate the current address that is appropriate to your purpose.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. 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 of their working days, not three calendar days.

2. If you know someone's work schedule, respect it.

    a. 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.

3. Unless you know otherwise, assume the recipient does not work on the weekend.

4. If you know someone is on holiday, do not send them an email.

Part 3: Writing Your Email

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 content. Examples:

    Subject: Psy 210 quiz 3 question (from 210 student to professor)
    Subject: WPA conference presentation (from WPA attendee to a presenter)

2. Use the subject line to help the reader categorize the content. 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.

    Subject: Psy 210 question
    Subject: Problem with data entry file! Help!
    Subject: Suggestion for lab orientation procedures

3. 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.

Salutations

1. In every email you send, be aware if you are sending a formal letter or having an informal conversation. Email is a cross between formal, written letters and informal, spoken conversation.

    a. In EVERY formal, written letter, we use salutations, such as "Dear Dr. Smith.".

    b. In informal, spoken conversation, we do not repeat the person's name every time we speak. In this instance, you can use informal salutations such as "Hi", "Susan", or omit the salutation altogether.

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. 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 or 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…."

Formatting

The recipient of your email may 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.

1. Indenting may not work properly. Separate paragraphs with an extra line.

2. Tables may not work properly.

3. AVOID making your professional emails look pretty. 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).

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.

Part 4: Clarity

Keeping Everyone Informed

1. If you are working with two 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.

2. 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 the work we promised them. If a personal or health crisis occurs, a short functional email is sufficient. 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 more time they will have to prepare for your absence.

Time and Location

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

1. Give actual dates (March 3) or days (Wednesday). 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. Regardless of what the date and time stamp say, the recipient is unlikely to read them or note their importance.

    a. 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."

    b. 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."

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. Therefore, make sure that your emails are clear.

2. Be concise and to the point. Do not ramble or repeat yourself. However, do not leave out any important material. In particular, do not make your email so brief that you are rude

3. Spell-check your emails before you send them. This improves clarity and is a part of common courtesy.

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.

Part 5: Spam and Viruses

Avoiding Looking Like Spam

Many email recipients receive a lot of spam. Therefore they 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 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.

3. Use a meaningful subject line. Emails with no subject line (or subject lines that aren't meaningful) are likely to be interpreted as spam by both humans and automatic spam filters.

4. Personalize your email. Address the recipient by name. Add content in the email that is specific to you and the recipient.

   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 or resend the email

   a. People may not check their spam folder to see if there are any emails there that are not spam.

   b. 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.

   c. If it is important to know whether someone has read your email, ask for a confirmation stating they have received your email. 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, check your spam folder. Especially, if you are expecting an email and do not receive it.

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.

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. Even if the return address says that the email is from someone you know, it may not be. 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

4. If you are not sure if an email, a link, or an attachment is legitimate, email the sender in a different email chain and ask them. 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.

2. In your email, specifically state that there is an attachment, and say what is in the attachment.

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. 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 by emailing files to yourself. Your email can be accessed from anywhere, which makes it convenient. By the way, Gmail allows a lot of storage space (over 15 GB, as of Spring 2022) and allows you to organize emails by categories.

6. If the recipient has trouble opening your file, ensure that the file type is compatible with the software they are using. If the file is incompatible, ask what software they use, change the file type to the one appropriate for their software, and resend it.

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. 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 the intended recipients. 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."

Part 6: Forwarding and Copying

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, who the email is addressing.

   a. Put the person to whom you are sending the email in the "TO" address line.

   b. 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.

   c. Double check that you have included all of the email addresses you need.

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. 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. Unlike in-person conversations between two or more people, with email it is easy to keep everyone informed.

4. 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 specific lab members.

5. It is only appropriate to use a general greeting (e.g., Hi everyone,) when you are addressing a random assortment of people you know.

6. 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. You need to take the time to copy the email as many times as necessary and send individually addressed emails to ensure responses from everyone.

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.

Part 7: Making up for the Loss of Non-verbal Communication

Friendly Words

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.

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", or "I enjoyed reading the paper you sent me."

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:

   > "Hi Jan, want to go for coffee after class? Cheers, Steve."
   > "Yeah, that would be great."
   > "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. 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.

Emotions and Non-Verbal Communication

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

   a. The first is an explicit statement of a non-verbal communication signal. The following are some examples: "Your story made me laugh" and "I am at a loss for words". People sometimes use emoticons (such as ":)") 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.

   b. The second type of substitute for non-verbal communication is an explicit statement of an emotion. 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", and "I am stressed out because of the deadline."

   If you choose 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; choose a milder word than you would when talking face to face. 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 modified the appearance of your email, this will influence the interpretation of the words in your email. If the writing is colored, 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.

Empathy

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.

1. One way to acknowledge another's experience is to reflect what they said. For example, "You mentioned you are having trouble downloading the file."

2. 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 choose a milder emotion word than you think the person is actually feeling. For example, say "frustrated" rather than "furious".

3. A third way to acknowledge another's experience is to state your own reaction to the event or a similar event.

    a. 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."

    b. 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.

4. 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 sincere. 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."

5. 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."

Politeness to Those with Higher Status

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 these non-verbal cues are lost in text-only emails. To receive a favorable response from the recipient, we must add in substitutes.

1. 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.

2. Sign your email formally (Best Regards, Sincerely, Thank you). Do not use an informal signature (Best, Thanks,) until the higher-status person does.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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, 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: inexpert use of formatting options will reduce your credibility.

Part 8: Setting up Meetings

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.

   a. Jane's first email: available times.

   b. John's reply email: suggest specific time.

   c. Jane's reply email: confirm time.

3. 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.

    a. The organizer's first email, asking for all the times when it is physically possible for each person to meet with the group, along with their top three (or five) preferred times

    b. The replies from each attendee

    c. The organizer's second email, stating the time and location of the meeting

    d. 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

    a. 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,
    Kim

    b. The other person replies, giving the time of the meeting

    c. The team members who will be attending the meeting confirm that they will attend.

Part 9: Questions

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?"

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 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.

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.

Part 10: Replies

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 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. 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 timeframe, 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 for this. It is inevitable that some emails

will be overlooked, misfiled, or accidentally deleted. If you do not receive a reply within the timeframe 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!"

Part 11: Useful Content

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. Do not say an email is URGENT unless it is.

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 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 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.

Finding a Previous Email

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.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 allow you to search by recipient, topic, date, or content.

History

1. Most modern email programs automatically include a history of the on-going conversation. In Gmail, the history is trimmed from your most recent email, but can be viewed by you and the recipients by pressing the three dots at the bottom of the email. This makes it easy for the user to trace the history of a series of emails.

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.

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.

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 kim.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.

Revive Your Inbox

Other useful websites:

Make Email Look Good in Gmail

How to Create a HTML Email in Gmail