

1. Be concise and to the point.

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be brief and requires a different kind of writing than letters.

2. Answer all questions and anticipate further questions.

If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions. If you can anticipate questions your e-mail might cause, the recipient will be grateful and impressed with your efficient and thoughtful customer service.

3. Proofread before you hit “send.”

Improper spelling, grammar, and punctuation give a bad impression of you and the place you work. Use spell check and proofread carefully for missing words and other errors.

4. Make it personal.

Not only should the e-mail be personally addressed, it should also include personal (customized) content. For this reason, auto replies are usually not very effective. However, templates can be used effectively in this way (see tip #5).

5. Use templates for frequently used responses.

Some questions you get over and over again, such as directions to the campus and parking. Save these texts to paste into future messages. Save your templates in a Word document or use pre-formatted emails.

6. Answer right away.

People nowadays expect to receive a response quickly. E-mails should be replied to within 24 hours and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, just send an email saying you will get back to them.

7. Do not attach unnecessary files.

Avoid sending large attachments; recipients may have limits on their accounts. Compress files or link to online documents. Send PDFs when possible.

8. Use proper structure & layout.

Reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, so layout is important. Use short paragraphs and skip lines between paragraphs. Number or use bullets for separate points.

9. Do not overuse the high priority option!

Remember the story of the boy who cried wolf. Save the high priority option for when you really need it. Don't overuse “important” or “urgent” in the subject line either.

10. Do not write in CAPITALS.

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. Don't do it.

11. Don't leave out the message thread.

When you reply to an email, include the original mail in your reply (i.e., click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'). This saves them time finding out the context of the emails.

12. Decide when you really need to Reply to All and when you need to use the cc: field.

Only use Reply to All if you need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message. Some information is needed by only the originator of the message. Use the cc: field as information only and, if it's not obvious, let them know why they are being copied.

13. Mass mailings -- use the Bcc: field or do a mail merge.

When sending a mass email mailing, place all addresses in the Bcc: field to protect the privacy of everyone's email. So your message doesn't look like spam, do a mail merge. This also allows you to use fields in the message so that you can address each recipient personally. For more information on how to do a mail merge, consult the Help in Word.

14. Be careful with abbreviations and emoticons.

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of these meanings and in business emails these are not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-).

15. Pay attention to formatting.

Be aware that the sender might not be able to view the formatting you use. When using a colored font, use one that is easy to read.

16. Do not request delivery and read receipts.

This will usually annoy your recipient. Besides, the recipient might have blocked that function or his/her software might not support it. If you want to know whether an email was received, ask the recipient to let you know.

17. Do not recall a message.

Your message has already been delivered and read. A recall request just looks silly. It is better to send an email to correcting the mistake you made.

18. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.

If you don't want your email to be viewed by others, don't send it. Never make any libelous, sexist, or racially discriminating comments in emails.

19. Use a meaningful subject line and change it when the topic changes.

Use a subject line that is meaningful. When further emails have different information, change the subject line to indicate the new topic.

20. Use active instead of passive voice.

Use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, "We will take care of this today" sounds better than "This will be taken care of today."

21. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters and don't reply to spam.