

- The dispatch and retrieval of messages is virtually instantaneous.
- A single message can be sent simultaneously to several recipients.
- Other files can be attached to e-mails.
- E-mail is a highly effective, low-cost method.

□ Writing Effective E-mails

E-mail is a written form of communication. All the rules relevant to written communication are applicable to e-mails also.

1. The Subject Line

It is the subject line that the reader will be reading before going through the actual message.

People receive a large number of e-mails everyday. They often find it a wearisome task to go through all of them. So they first look at the subject line. If the subject line fails to catch their attention, they move on to the next e-mail. So give your message a *relevant, specific and appropriate* subject line. The subject line

- should be brief,
- need not be a complete sentence, and
- must contain a clue to the contents of the message.

A subject line like *information about school books* does not convey much. It should have specified the standard(s) and the subject(s).

2. Greeting

Greeting is a desirable courtesy in the beginning. We do not need to be formal and write *Dear Mr. Sanyal* or *My dear Mrs. Jain*. But we must include an informal greeting like *Hello Aditya* or *Hi Ananya*. When the message begins with a greeting like these, the person knows that the message is meant for them and that they are not receiving a cc (courtesy copy).

3. Complimentary Close

Similarly, there is no need to include a formal complimentary close like *Yours sincerely, R.K. Gupta*. You also do not need to include expressions like *with warm regards* / *kind regards*. Such expressions have become meaningless through overuse. But do put your name at the end of the message. That is an indication that your message is over. Besides, the name itself conveys your regards.

4. Proper Organisation

E-mail messages are transmitted fast but that does not mean that they should be composed also at the same speed. Messages that are not properly planned and organised turn out to be vague and incoherent and irritate the reader. So ensure proper organisation of your message.

5. Formatting

E-mail messages should be properly formatted. Formatted messages give a good look besides gaining in terms of clarity and urgency. Use bullets/markers/numbers so that the recipient can instantaneously grasp the details of the message. Use blank space generously. Long, verbose, tightly typed messages look boring and oppressive.

6. Complete and Precise Messages

Make your e-mail messages precise but complete in every respect. Don't omit; don't repeat; don't include anything irrelevant.

□ The Language of E-mails

The language used in your e-mails should be such that they are easy to read, understand and respond to. Take special care of the following points:

- Your *paragraphs* should be *short, crisp and focussed*. The first sentence of each paragraph should suggest its theme. Use appropriate sentence linkers to make each paragraph a coherent whole.
- Use *short and simple sentences*. An e-mail is no place to demonstrate with what ease you can handle complex structures or how rich your vocabulary is. The simpler your language, the more effective your message will be.
- It is preferable to use the *active voice*. Instead of writing "These accounts are to be settled by tomorrow evening", it is better to write "Settle these accounts by tomorrow evening." However, use your own judgment to ascertain what kind of sentences will be more effective.
- Use *concrete* words with *positive* connotations.
- Don't use *jargon* and *slangs*. Slangs belong to the realm of spoken language. They are likely to be misunderstood and may leave a bitter taste in the mouth. A little jargon might be in order while interacting with colleagues of your own profession. But don't use jargon merely to impress others or to camouflage your ignorance.
- In business e-mails, don't use abbreviations and acronyms which you may use while e-mailing personal friends.

However, some of them may be used if you think your reader will be familiar with them.

You may add to this list or not use any of them. There is no hard and fast rule about it. Only, make sure that your acronyms and abbreviations do not obstruct clarity and do not make your reader feel dismayed and irritated because he does not understand what you have written.

- Adopt the 'you' attitude while writing your e-mails. Use 'I, me, mine' very sparsely. Replace these words with 'you, your, yours' etc. The 'you' words are likely to create a favourable impact.

- E-mail acronyms and abbreviations that you may use

ASAP	:	as soon as possible
BBL	:	be back later
BTW	:	by the way
BFN	:	bye for now
cc	:	courtesy copy (not carbon copy)
e.g.	:	for example (Do not write <i>for e.g.</i>)
etc.	:	etcetra
NB	:	please note (nota bene)
pcs	:	pieces
pls	:	please
P.S.	:	post script
qty	:	quantity
i.e.	:	that is (id est)
Re :	:	regarding
Ref	:	reference
RSVP	:	please reply (rezpondez s'il vous plait)
tbc	:	to be confirmed
FAQ	:	frequently asked question
FYI	:	for your information
TIA	:	thanks in advance

- Make sure that your message
 - is grammatically correct,
 - has no spelling errors, and
 - is correctly punctuated.

While punctuation errors may distort the meaning, bad grammar and bad spellings irritate. Remember that your message is not only your reflection as a person but is your company's representative. So do not convey a poor impression about yourself and your company through errors that could be avoided with a little care.

- Use conventional rules of capitalisation.
- Be gender-sensitive. Avoid using gender-discriminatory words as far as possible.

□ Twelve Golden Rules for Effective E-mails

In the last section, you had some tips on the language appropriate to e-mails. Given below are a few general guidelines.

1. Be prompt in responding to your e-mails. Fastness is one of the main advantages of e-mail. But if you sleep over your e-mails, that advantage is immediately neutralised.
2. As a rule, the length of your message should be kept to one screen only. If your message exceeds one screen, begin with the most important details and give other points in order of their importance.
3. Limit the lines of your e-mail to 80 characters (60 characters if the e-mail is to be forwarded).
4. If there is a file or document you want to send to your reader, send it as an attachment with your e-mail.
5. If you are answering a query, or responding to a request, refer to the e-mail your response is related to right in the beginning so that the receiver is absolutely clear what you are talking about.
6. If the message requires the reader to do something, the action required must be spelt out in very specific terms. The part of the message related to the action should be so worded and placed so conspicuously (using bullet marks/numbers/bold letters/underlining that the reader does not have to read the message twice to know what he/she is being asked to do.
7. Use the appropriate level of formality. In this respect, an e-mail is no different from a business letter.
8. Your language should reflect your courteousness. *Tone* is an important supplement to a verbal message. It conveys the speaker's emotions and properly reinforces the message. Unfortunately, the tone cannot be conveyed through the written word. But we can definitely use such words as convey friendliness, politeness and consideration. Sarcastic language should be strictly avoided in e-mails.
9. Politeness does not cost anything but it brings rich dividends. So be polite and warm-hearted. But remember that politeness is not a matter of language alone. It must spring from the heart.
10. Make a very discriminating use of courtesy copies (ccs). Since sending an e-mail is not heavy on your pocket, it is no reason why a cc should be sent to everybody. People's inboxes are overflowing with meaningless e-mails. So don't add to the problem.

• Don't send a cc to everyone you know; just send a cc to people who need to know.

11. Double-check the receiver's e-mail address. A mistake in a single character is likely to send the e-mail to a wrong address.
12. Check that the computer's internal clock and date settings are correct before you send your e-mail.

❑ Specimen E-mails

Example 1. An e-mail from a publisher in response to a query about the availability of certain books.

From : jaicopub@vsnl.com
To : jayatikhanna@yahoo.com
Re : Availability of books by Robin S. Sharma

Dear Mrs. Khanna

- All the books by Robin S. Sharma except *Discover Your Destiny* are in stock.
- You get 10 per cent discount if your order exceeds Rs. 1000.
- You can get the books you want to read in a week's time. Just send us a D.D. payable at Delhi to cover the cost of the books. You don't have to pay any postage.
- You can log on to our website www.jaicobooks.com for a detailed description of all our publications on motivation and self-help.

M.S. Tewari

Marketing Manager

Example 2 . An e-mail to a supplier about the wrong supply of certain goods.

From : jindalsports@rediffmail.com
To : esskayenterprises@vsnl.com
Re : Wrong supply of goods, our order No. 879/12/09

Mr. Bijlani

Many thanks for the sports wear we received yesterday. Unfortunately, there has occurred a serious mistake in the supply of goods.

- We had ordered 25 pairs of white socks, 25 light blue shorts and 25 pairs of white tennis shoes.

- What we have received are:
25 pairs of white socks,
25 pairs of brown sports shoes.
- Kindly send the shorts and the tennis shoes to reach us by 12 December.
- These items are to be supplied to the athletes of a college participating in an Inter-College Sports Meet commencing on 17 December.
- Make arrangements to get back the brown sports shoes we didn't order.

GL Mehta
Sales Manager

□ Questions for Assessment

- A**
1. Give the full form of the following abbreviations:
(a) cc (b) e.g. (c) Re (d) NB
(e) PS (f) Ref (g) ASAP
 2. Write short notes on the following:
(a) The use of acronyms in e-mails,
(b) E-mail attachments,
(c) Salutation and complimentary close in e-mails.
 3. (a) What precautions should be taken while forwarding an e-mail?
(b) What kind of information is not suitable to be sent through an e-mail?
- B**
1. "Writing an e-mail is no different from writing a business letter." Discuss.
 2. What guidelines would you keep in mind while drafting an e-mail?
 3. Discuss the principles on which your e-mails should be organised.
 4. Draft the following e-mails:
(a) From a company secretary to a director informing her of the time and venue of an emergent meeting of your company. Tell her that her presence is important.
(b) To a hotel at Manali seeking information about the availability of deluxe rooms and the tariff.
(c) To a hotel manager cancelling your booking.
(d) From a house-maker to Kitchens India seeking information about modular kitchens.
(e) From a manufacturer of cosmetic goods to a distributor giving information about a new range of skincare products launched by you recently.
(f) To a manufacturer cancelling an order because there has been an inordinate delay in the supply of goods.