**Summary**

**Make messages concise**

Email messages are often more difficult to read than other printed matter, and long emails can quickly discourage recipients. Use an easy-to-read layout. Paragraphs should be short, with blank lines between each paragraph. When making separate points, number them or use bullets so they can easily be identified.

**Be direct**

While personal communications are driven by factors such as appearance and tone, email is based solely on written words. It can be very difficult to determine the sender’s demeanor from the text of an email, and subtleties of tone can easily be misunderstood.

Make your points clearly and directly, and be obvious in your meanings. Remember this when reading email as well – a tone that appears to be aggressive or derogatory may simply be the result of someone’s haste in dashing off a reply. Reread messages to see if you may be misinterpreting the words.

**Be Courteous**

Always be courteous and use words like ‘Dear, Nice to hear from you, Thanks a million, Take care’ in your email. Always start your email with Dear / Hi [Person’s name] and thank them for their response, email or enquiry. End off with a short thank you note. As emotions build up in email communication, it is always wise to use the 'right' words in order to receive a positive or respectful response from the other party.

**Stick to one topic**

Try to avoid covering multiple topics in a single email. When this happens, it is easy for critical information to get overlooked. Instead, cover one matter per email, sending separate messages to cover each unrelated issue, even if the questions or comments are for the same person.

**Make the subject meaningful**

Use a subject heading that is meaningful to you and to the recipient. For example, if you’re sending someone product information, write a subject field that has the actual name of the product instead of just “product information.” Similarly, the focus of message thread may change over several email responses. When that occurs, change the message field to reflect the shift – i.e. “Your 10/10 Order (Widget Information)” instead of “Re: Widget Information.”

**Keep threads relevant**

When responding to emails, use the “reply” button instead of creating a new email so that the previous message is also included. This “message threading” helps ensure that your response can be read in context, and the original sender won’t have to remember the specifics of the original email. But use threads judiciously. Multiple threads can make the email overly long and confuse the reader, especially when the original topic has shifted. Read over old threads and manually remove them when you feel they are no longer appropriate to the topic at hand.

**Watch the “cc” field**

Indiscriminate copying of email can clog people’s inboxes, and cause them to habitually ignore messages that really are meant for them. Use the “cc” field only when recipients need to know about a topic. Do not include a list of people in a thread that has become a two-way conversation. In general, use the “to” field to identify the email’s primary recipient/s. Use “cc” for those people who are not active participants, and do not have to reply. Use “bcc” (blind copy) when you want to include a person but don’t want others to know they are receiving it, or when you are sending out to a large group and don’t want to eat up space with several lines of addresses.

**Avoid unnecessary attachments**

Large attachments do more than just annoy recipients. They can bring down email boxes (especially those that have an inbox size limitation), and slow down performance. In some cases, delivery of large-sized emails can be delayed by email servers, causing urgent messages to arrive late. Limit attachments only to those that are productive to the recipient, and, when possible, compress files so they take up less space. And be sure to scan all attachments for viruses before you send them – the last thing you want to do is accidentally infect a customer’s network. Large attachments should be uploaded to your personal FTP/WEB account for the other party’s download. (\*Anything larger than 5MB)

**Use a business tone**

While it is certainly okay to warm up an email with personal greeting and a less-than-formal style, stay away from online slang in business communications. Abbreviations such as LOL (laugh out loud) or BTW (by the way) are best avoided, as are smiley faces :-) and other emoticons. And never, ever, use all uppercase letters -- this is the online equivalent of screaming.

**Save “high priority” for the truly urgent**

Don’t use your email program’s “high priority” function indiscriminately. Flag emails this way only when you really need to alert the recipient that it requires immediate attention. Show similar caution with the words “urgent” or “important” when used in a message’s subject field.

**Proofread before you send**

Read over every email you create before you send it out to be sure it conveys the message properly. Look at it through the eyes of the recipient to avoid possible misunderstandings or inappropriate comments. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation; both to make sure they are correct, and that they convey the message properly. If your email program has a spell-check function, as most do, use it.