

## Email Guidelines: Best Practices & Etiquette

- **Subject:**

Choose a clear subject line. One should immediately have an idea of the contents of the email just by reading the subject line. A good, clear subject line makes it easier for the email to be prioritized and found for future reference.

- **Salutations:**

- Remember to include a salutation in your email. Avoid highly casual salutations such as Hey, Yo, or Hi Folks. A simple Hi xyz or Hello XYZ or Good morning will do just fine.
- Do not directly start with whatever you want to tell the person without first greeting him/her (that is the salutation). No matter where you are in the organizational hierarchy.
- Address all the people you have put in the To field in your salutation. If there are more than four people, use 'Hello all' or 'Hello team' instead.

- **Recipients:**

Check that you have added the correct recipients before hitting Send.

- **Replying to emails:**

- Always reply to emails where you are the principal recipient. It is courteous and good practice to reply as soon as possible. Even if you have no solution or answer to the question in the email or have no time to address that issue, send a reply acknowledging the email and stating that you will get back to the sender within a specified period.

- Reply to the last email sent in a thread. Do not send a new email unless you are addressing an entirely different topic. This helps the recipients to understand the background of the email.

- **Whom to put in the To field:**

Add the one who is expected to take action on the contents of the email in the To field.

- **Whom to include in the Cc field:**

- Add those who need to be aware of the contents of the email or the progress of the task discussed in the email in the Cc field. These people
- Do acknowledge those copied briefly in the email at the first instance of copying them. That way everyone has an idea of why they and the others have been included in that email.
- If you have been copied in an email and you have no idea why, always ask the sender to clarify the purpose of putting you in the Cc field.

- **Read Receipts:**

- Please remember that receiving a Read Receipt request is NOT a negative reflection on you; it is a way to ensure that communication has been successful. Successful and complete communication is one of the key contributors to the success of any task and ultimately, the organization.
- Reply to Read Receipts promptly. They are there for a reason and it is good practice at times to send them, especially in a large organization or if the email is a crucial one and you feel that a person may accidentally overlook it.
- Do send a Read Receipt if it is crucial that a message be read by a certain time or to keep track of whether all those concerned have read it.

- **Reply All:**

- Use Reply All when your message is something that those in the To and Cc fields need to know.
- Do not use Reply All if your message is crucial to:
  - Only the person in the To field
  - The person in the To field and only a few of those in the Cc field (If this is the case, add the recipients manually.)
- Do not use Reply All if you were a recipient in the Bcc field as by doing so you will reveal that you were a recipient, which may cause complications.
- Do not use Reply All if you are expressing gratitude to one person, unless you want everyone else in the email to know that you are thanking that person.

- **Content:**

- Keep the email as brief as possible. This ensures that the recipient is inclined to read it even when pressed for time.
- However, be sure to include all the important points of what you want to convey. Do not keep your email so short that the message is incomplete or difficult to understand.
- Keep sentences short and to the point. This reduces the possibility of misunderstandings.
- Answer questions directly. For e.g., for the question "Do you have the document?" your answer would be "Yes, I have the document." Any additional information would come after that.
- If there is a lot to communicate, try to break down the content into bullet points for easy reading. Make sure that each bullet begins with a separate thought or issue. Make sure that that thought or issue is clearly and briefly stated at the beginning of the bullet.

- If you are requesting a number of actions to be taken or communicating feedback consisting of more than one point, use bullets. Bulleted points are easier to understand and refer to.
- If there are multiple major issues to be addressed regarding a project or task, send separate emails for each issue. Do not try to include all the issues in the same email. For e.g., if you want to address the schedule of a project as well as new client requirements for that project, send out separate emails: one regarding the schedule and one regarding the client requirements.
- **Other precautions:**
  - Add the email address/addresses last.
  - Add any attachments first.
  - If you have attached a file, do mention it. That way, in case there is a glitch and the file attachment does not come through, the recipient is aware that it was supposed to be there and can request you to resend it.
  - When forwarding messages, specify why you thought that person might find it useful.
  - Avoid acronyms or abbreviations. Emails are a record of communication. People should not be wondering what that abbreviation you have chosen stands for. Be clear and specific.
  - Avoid writing in all capital letters. It seems as if you are shouting.
  - Proofread your emails before sending them out.
  - Avoid multiple consecutive exclamation or question marks as this comes across as rude.

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