

## ISTE-260: Exercise 3

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Group 1

Part 5

Writing professional emails is a common practice in the professional world and being good at it will help students succeed. Most of our interviewees were students, questioning how they go about writing and formulating emails. We also had a few adults interviewed to see if and how their responses would differ from students.

We chose to interview a few key demographics: college students, mid to low-level management, retired person. We did this so that we got different perspectives from people from all walks of life. In order to gauge the interest of this product we needed to understand who our target audience would be. The general theme was that the college students and younger professionals (under 30) were excited about the idea of an automated email writer, while the older folks were a bit more skeptical.

The opinions were split on whether writing emails were stressful or not. Some spend time thinking hard about what they want to say while others spend no time at all and just type. One interviewee said (in response to “Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why”) “yes, because I worry too much that I’ll say something unprofessional sounding”, however another interviewee reacted in an opposite manner, stating “no, I don’t worry because the people I’m emailing are real people as well”. Our application can help those that stress and worry about what they want to say by giving helpful suggestions and providing input on better ways to phrase words and sentences. Writing an email shouldn’t be a stressful task and should be as easy as talking to family and friends.

A common format for students is beginning with “Hello Professor \_\_\_\_\_” or the name of whoever the person they are sending the email to. Everyone interviewed agrees that properly structured sentences, correct grammar, and no spelling mistakes are the most important aspects to a professional sounding email. One interviewee said “if you have misspellings and bad grammar, it shows that you don’t care that much”, emphasizing how important it is to proofread the body text. The body text should be kept short enough to not be an essay while also getting into all the details. A signature is almost always kept at the bottom on an email, either a formatted one with a few descriptive lines of text for contact information or just a name. For example, a nice formatted signature for a student could include name, major, and phone number like so:

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*Fig 1. Image describing an email signature, censored for anonymity.*

The signature or somewhere near the end of the body should also include a “thank you” for a professional closing response. Our program would have the ability to format an email based on user preferences: a title, a correctly spell checked body, and a proper signature.

The process of professional emailing is quite different compared to texting or emailing family and friends, all interviewees agree. All answers were about the same; texting involves much shorter, incomplete sentences and internet slang. A feature our product could include would be reading through for slang or abbreviations and replacing it with professional alternatives. For example, abbreviations such as “bc” can be scanned and replaced with “because”, most likely using an option to replace just in case the user does not want to change it.

A common frustration that was expressions between all subjects was the amount of time that they spent writing emails. Many subjects said that they delayed writing emails since they knew that they would need to block out a large amount of time. One of the other questions we asked was “Do you get stressed about writing professional emails?”. The answer was a resounding yes and was a consensus among all subjects. One response was “Yes, I worry about choice of words and how it might be interpreted by recipient”. Our automated email writer would make the process of email writing a lot faster, more efficient, and eliminate a lot of the stress from the arduous task.

The interviewees expressed at least some interest in the product. They all saw the benefit of having a product that would speed up their stressful emailing processes. One interviewee said that he “would only use it for the employer emails” because he felt that typing to professors or relatives was mostly stressless. This seemed to be the consensus for our participants: writing to people higher on the professional ladder are more difficult to talk to, especially if the written email is their first impression of you.

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A few interviewees expressed a desire for voice to text functionality, which would benefit short-sighted people. They said that the voice to text would make email writing more personable and less strenuous. We got a mixed reaction to the idea of templates as some said that it made the emails feel less invested while others praised it for being easily translated to multiple contexts. There was an interest for a more sophisticated automatic reply system that can actually read a person's calendar and provide smarter response. For example if someone asks if you are available for an appointment, the suggested auto-reply would be able to look at your calendar and say "Yes, I'm available" or "No, I'm busy".

We think the template would be a good option to add because some of the interviewees expressed a desire for a more reliable format. Part of the stress that comes from writing these emails is in the phrasing of their contents. To alleviate this, a simple header, subject, and footer template will be provided along with the auto-fill program so that the user can be a bit more carefree while typing. Templates will have the option to be customizable so that the participants who originally disagreed with them might still have some interest with this feature. The customizability of the templates will allow these users to make their emails more personal, which is what they expressed concern over when the feature was presented to them.

Overall, all participants have expressed at least some desire for a product such as this in their lives. While only certain subjects felt stress writing to professors or relatives, all of them expressed at least a hint of stress when writing emails to employers. The biggest challenge of implementing this product will most likely be the customizable templates for the participants who were worried about their emails seeming too robotic. This will be difficult to create because making template tools and teaching the user how to use those tools might turn them off from using the template tool at all if the tutorial is poorly made.

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### Appendix:

#### Nick's Interviews:

19 year old, 2nd year Game Design student at RIT.

1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. I do write emails, almost once or twice a week
2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. I have never used grammarly
3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. I don't use the auto response feature mostly because I almost never get an accurate prediction for what I actually want to say.
4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. Participant did not want to answer this question
5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a. I don't put off writing emails to potential employers but it does take me longer to write them compared with other emails
6. How do usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. I am a bit more formal when it comes to emails as compared to texts
7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. I use my laptop to write emails
8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email? Why?
  - a. I worry about spelling and grammar because I prefer to be professional when writing emails
9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write emails?
  - a. I don't use any third party software
10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No, I don't have any standard email templates

#### John's Interviews:

Interview with 62 year old Male

- 1) Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?

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- a) Yes, about 12 a week. Used to write a lot more when working (is retired now).  
When working, wrote about 25 emails per work day
- 2) Have you used grammarly?
  - a) No, doesn't even know what it is.
- 3) Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a) No doesn't use Gmail and was not familiar with the feature
- 4) Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a) For writing emails to Customers yes. For certain emails want to use the correct language and they take more time.
- 5) Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a) Yes sometimes. Bc he knows it will take a long and will be difficult. Might not know exactly what he wants to say yet and wants to think about it.
- 6) How do usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a) For messaging: much less formal, shorter
  - b) For emails: more formal, usually longer, takes more time
- 7) What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a) Primarily on laptop, if short email or urgent may use mobile device if can't get to laptop. When working wrote more emails on phone when on the go (at an airport for example)
- 8) Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email? Why?
  - a) Yes, don't want to misspell or use crappy grammar in a professional environment. Believes that spelling and grammar are crucial when writing to colleagues and customers. If you have misspellings and bad grammar, it shows that you don't care that much.
- 9) Do you use any third party software or applications to write emails?
  - a) No
- 10) Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a) Not a template, but used a signature that contained Name, title, contact info

### **Yogi Adhikari**

1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. Yes. too many - 60/70
2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. Yes

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3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. Yes, when I am out of work. It's preset and I Just turn it on/off as needed.
4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. Yes, I worry about choice of words and how it might be interpreted by recipient
5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a. Yes, time constraint. Need to focus
6. How do usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. Email has to be more formal. No abbreviations. Standard language.
7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. Normally on PC, sometimes on my Mac, and rarely from my iPhone.
8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email? Why?
  - a. Yes. English is not my first language and I am not very comfortable in my ability to write. I worry about spellings a lot.
9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write emails?
  - a. Yes and no. Sometimes I compose the email in Word and copy paste into Outlook.
10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No, but I want to use templates in the future.

### Ellie's Interview 1:

1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. 1
2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. No
3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. No
4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. No
5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?

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- a. No because I'll forget if I put it off
- 6. How do you usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. I use poor sentence structure when texting, emails have good grammar and "stuff"
- 7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. Computer (desktop)
- 8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email?
  - a. Yes
- 9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write?
  - a. No
- 10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No

### Ellie's Interview 2:

- 1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. 1-2
- 2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. No
- 3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. To help with what I write but I don't straight up send them alone.
- 4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. Yes because I worry too much that I'll say something unprofessional sounding
- 5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a. Yes but only to think about what I want to say
- 6. How do you usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. Slang and not complete sentences except with my distant family I try to text more properly
- 7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. Phone or computer
- 8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email?
  - a. Yes
- 9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write?
  - a. No
- 10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No

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### Ellie's Interview 3:

1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. Maybe 1 a month
2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. Yes
3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. No (don't know what that is)
4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. Yes to a degree because I know I have to spell [redacted] right
5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a. No
6. How do usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. Use abbreviations a lot more with friends and not complete sentences, uses slang
7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. Laptop usually
8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email?
  - a. Yes
9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write?
  - a. My brain (just kidding) just grammarly
10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No

### Kathy's Interview

21 year old, 4th year Engineering student at RIT

1. Do you write emails? If so, how many per week?
  - a. No, unless it's for group project.
2. Have you used grammarly?
  - a. No, but have heard about it and have interest in it.
3. Do you ever use the auto-response feature on Gmail? Why or Why not?
  - a. Just started because it just got implemented on my phone so I have no feelings on it yet.
4. Do you get stressed writing emails to professors? Why?
  - a. No because they are regular people as well.



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5. Do you ever put off writing emails? Why?
  - a. No, I like to get everything sorted out as soon as possible if I can.
6. How do you usually type or text when messaging family and friends? How does this contrast with how you write emails?
  - a. When messaging with family and friends, I tend to write once and never look back. Typically I'm very casual and leave spelling errors and use abbreviation like 'u' for you. I message in a way that only family and friends would know what I'm talking about. It contrasts with my emails, which I send to employers and to other adults so I take my time reviewing what I'm writing so the receiver of my email's has a good impression of me.
7. What type of device do you usually use when writing emails?
  - a. Usually gmail or microsoft office.
8. Do you worry about spelling and grammar in your professional email?
  - a. Yes, I do take my time to proofread it aloud before submitting it to my professor.
9. Do you use any third party software or applications to write?
  - a. Yes, I usually use Word or even google docs when I write.
10. Do you have any standardized email templates for use in business communications?
  - a. No.