

# Major Assignment 1

## Email Communication in the Workplace

ENG 332

### OVERVIEW

For this assignment, I would like you to **write a brief email to a professor/your boss with your intent to start a research project with them or on your own** (imagine you must inform your boss that you intend to submit for funding to begin this project).

This research will be the basis for what you do for the rest of this course in terms of your other assignments (a micro-literature review, a research funding proposal (RFP), a presentation of that research/RFP, and a general audience article about the research). Often, this will be the flow by which you complete your research--but **don't get too stressed now**--it is just the beginning.

Please think about a topic you want to research, then begin your email of intent. In this email, you should synthesize information on why the research should be completed and why you will be the one to do it. Also, share your thoughts about how this information could be applied to future research and the field in general. For more information on what to include in your email and how to format it, please see the information below.

### AUDIENCE

Considering your audience is a very important element of writing professionally. For this assignment, I would like you to imagine that you are writing to **a professor you have never spoken to or a new boss at your job** (you will do this often, and you will have to introduce who you are and why they should care to read this email). For the purposes of this assignment, the professor's/boss's name is **Dr. Wolf**.

In this assignment, please imagine that you have never met Dr. Wolf and that Dr. Wolf holds an important position at their university or research facility. Dr. Wolf is expecting someone to email them since your colleague has told them you both have similar research interests. But they have never met you in person and do not know much about you. Please make sure you give Dr. Wolf a bit of context, so they understand why you are writing.

When writing to Dr. Wolf, please also keep in mind that they receive and read a great deal of email. Dr. Wolf would prefer to receive an email that uses concise language, clearly states its purpose, and gets right to the important points.

## PURPOSE

This assignment allows you to practice synthesizing information, which is a very important element of writing in the sciences in general. This assignment also allows you to practice writing in a formal, professional way and exposes you to the genre of the email, which tends to be a very common genre in professional writing.

Finally, this assignment has guidelines for format and content, as is the case with many documents we write in the science disciplines. This assignment gives you the opportunity to practice the following guidelines when producing a document.

## CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, AND DOCUMENT DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the required elements above, you must do the following:

- synthesize some of the most compelling information about what you want to research
  - To help make this synthesis more effective, you might want to focus on a particular field (say, the medical field) or a particular profession (for example, professors).
  - Please do not try to cover everything in this short email. Instead, make choices about what information is most important.
  - If you need to give Dr. Wolf more information, you might suggest an in-person meeting or a phone call.
- give some suggestions about why this research is important and why you want to work with them
  - This section should reflect the information you presented in your synthesis section.
  - This section should be shorter than your synthesis section.

## STYLE CONVENTIONS

- **Use a concise but formal writing style.** Please remember that formal writing does not mean using unnecessarily complicated language or big words. Formal writing is at its best when it is simple, clear, and respectful.
- **Proofread carefully to avoid any typos, errors, or unnecessary language.** Please do not forget to run spell check! As a rule of thumb, make a habit of running spellcheck at least twice for any document.
- **Use bullet points sparingly.** While these can be helpful, for this assignment I would prefer that you focus on using complete sentences and paragraphs. Make sure that all sentences are organized in a logical way, using transition words and phrases as needed.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT AUDIENCE

We modify our writing for different audiences by changing both the content and language we use to make sure it meets the needs of our readers.

When writing to a formal audience, we tend to use more **formal language** than when writing to an informal audience. You might say that formal language tends to have less “personality” than more informal language. However, writing formally does not mean being stuffy or unnecessarily complicated. It really means that your language should be invisible. The audience should not notice your words; they should only notice your ideas and information. This means using clear and simple language while being as precise and accurate as you can be.

Language is not the only element that we need to modify for different audiences. We also need to consider what our audience knows about our topic and what information they need or want to know. Thinking about this allows us to change the level and type of detail we give about our content depending on who we are writing to. For example, if you are writing to an audience of scientists in your field, you will not need to give them basic information about your field. However, if you are writing for people with no background in science at all, you may need to explain the most basic concepts for them to be able to grasp your meaning.

Regardless of what you are writing or who you are writing for, you should always think about the following 4 elements when you consider the audience:

- **Motivation** - Why would your intended audience read your document? What do they hope to learn or gain from reading your document? Does this motivation match your purpose for writing?
- **Expectations** - What does your audience expect from your document? Audience expectations can be related to many factors including genre and subject matter.
- **Preparedness** - How much background does your audience have about your topic? Do they understand jargon related to your field or will you need to adapt your language?
- **Receptiveness** - How receptive will your audience be to what you are sharing with them? Will they see what you are sharing as positive or negative?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Here](#) is a (sort of) funny essay written by a couple of professors to their students about writing emails in an academic setting.
- [Here](#) are instructions for setting up an email signature in Gmail.

## EXAMPLE EMAIL

Dear (or Dr.) **Professor X**:

My name is XX, and I am very interested in becoming involved in research in **Subject Area**. I am an **X** year student with research interests in **X**. I have taken **Courses** and **Additional Experiences**. My goal is to **Goal**.

I have reviewed your faculty profile and am interested in the work that you have done. I was intrigued by your journal article, "**Article Title**." It **Additional Information about Topic**. I would like to get involved in research in this area because it will help me to better prepare for **Goals**.

Would it be possible to meet with you to further discuss **Topic** and my possible involvement in research? I am available **Days and Times**. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

**XX**

**Student ID**

**Address**

**Phone**

**E-mail**

\* Please do not worry about word count. Think more about how you would complete this for real to someone--not just for this assignment. \*

## RUBRIC OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVES	POINTS
<b>RHETORICAL AWARENESS (30 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing demonstrates an obvious awareness of how to accomplish the intended outcome.</li><li>• Writing demonstrates an obvious awareness and adaptation to specific audiences.</li></ul>	

<b>CONTENT (25 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Synthesize some of the most compelling information about what you want to research</li> <li>● Give some suggestions about why this research is important and why you want to work with them</li> </ul>	
<b>ORGANIZATION &amp; STRUCTURE (25 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing incorporates appropriate rhetorical strategies for sequencing information in a clear and logical manner.</li> <li>● Coherent and easy to follow</li> </ul>	
<b>FORMATTING &amp; DESIGN (10 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Document demonstrates an obvious understanding and application of document design elements.</li> <li>● Document is visually appealing, consistent, and adheres to all standards.</li> </ul>	
<b>MECHANICS &amp; CONVENTIONS (10 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use a concise but formal writing style</li> <li>● Contain few spelling and grammatical errors and no patterns of error</li> </ul>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	