CHAPTER 25

Email and Blog Writing

Learning Objectives After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- understand the function and purpose of email writing
- identify the advantages and disadvantages of using email communication
- understand the pitfalls in using email communication
- figure out the nuances, content, and style considered standard in emails
- learn ways to improve your efficiency in drafting effective emails
- develop techniques to write an effective blog

25.1 INTRODUCTION

A few days back we found a message in our email box. It read something like this:

> Gd 2 c u at d con'f. ur papr was nice. me too intrstd n d same area. shall v come up wth a combo paper?
>
> b,rgds
>
> A. Prashar

For a while we were simply befuddled and could not figure out what the message was all about. As it became apparent after some initial struggle that the writer had appreciated our research paper that we had presented in a conference, we smiled. It was, however, a painful smile as we were hurt to see a language being distorted to the extent of being rendered unintelligible. There was no question in thinking of writing a 'combo' paper with such a writer who treated the language, which he used for communicating his ideas so disdainfully.

A writing like this certainly gnaws both at the heart of the language and the reader alike. Having said that, we are aware of the fact that such email messages have become a norm rather than an aberration. Many amongst us, particularly the youths of our times, are quite content in composing a message like this. Have you thought of the reasons that give rise to a practice like this in email communication?

And do you find it worth practising yourself? The coming section attempts to help you understand why writing such non-standard English is not advisable and why you should not develop a habit of using such language in your personal or professional interactions with others.

25.2 EMAIL WRITINGS—REASONS FOR POPULARITY

Electronic mail, popularly known as email (also e-mail), came into existence in the late twentieth century. Quickly, this progeny of computer technology took over from all other methods of exchanging information and now it is almost impossible to conceive of a world where people do not share their views, ideas, information, and data through emails. Following are some of the factors that have made email writings such a phenomenon in our times:

Emails are fast, cheap, easy to operate One reason why emails are today preferred to the traditional means of communication is that they are easy, prompt, and fast to use. Once you compose a mail, you can send it to as many people as required, instantaneously. Practically, to an email message of only a few words, you can attach large files of data, complicated spreadsheets, voluminous reports, lengthy procedures, elaborate schedules, detailed proposals, long instructions, and anything else that you wish your readers to read anywhere in the world. Because of its sweeping reach, universal accessibility, and blinding promptness, email is certainly the easiest, most prompt, and the cheapest mode of getting across to a large number of people all across the globe instantly.

Emails capture the spirit of the age Advancements in science and technology have added frantic pace to our lives. Today, all of us are so busy in our professional and personal lives that we tend to feel irritated and impatient with anything that consumes even a little more of our time than required. We certainly hate waiting in long queues for our turn to come. That is why, we have agents and operating-round-the-clock counters for getting us tickets for our rail, road, or air transport. There are kiosks in big cities where the agents take care of our water, electricity, and telephone bills; there are some other agents who take care of our life and health insurance premiums and income tax returns; there are buses, cars, bikes, other motor vehicles, and metros running all across the metro cities taking their mobile population from one destination to another. In this fast-paced life, anything that saves any time for us is certainly most welcome and becomes immediately desirable. Emails fall in consonance with such ethos of contemporary age.

Emails offer flexibility in tone and style Just as most of us are impatient in getting our turn to arrive in a long queue, many of us get impatient not only in getting our message across once written, but also in composing it. Once we take up a writing assignment, we want to see it off as soon as possible. So rather than choosing an elaborate sentence structure, we resort to choppy prose. Owing to the crunch of time available partly and mainly because of an attitude that regards contemptuously everything that requires some effort, we apply short cuts in all that we write and speak today. Since no traditional means of communication offers this flexibility, electronic mail is lapped up most readily by us. Aided by the speed offered by the medium of expression, we intend to carve messages which are easy to compose and quick to send. Moreover, since emails are used not just professionally but also personally, a sense of informality starts creeping into our style the moment we set ourselves into composing an email.

It is here that we need to have a cautious approach while composing an email. A small amount of informality may add warmth and vigour to your writing, but an exaggerated sense of informality can actually get you across to your reader as an amateurish individual showing you

in a very poor light. Hence, you need to carefully observe the email etiquette both in terms of content and style. A detailed discussion to this effect follows later on in this chapter.

Emails have become legal and valid Though starting informally, emails are now regarded as a valid and tenable proof to someone's claims legally. The logic behind this credence can be appreciated in the sense that after all, it is a written message sent over to the reader electronically. The change of medium thus does not take away the essential presence of the receiver and the sender in the process of communication. Moreover, since the delivery of an email message is immediately confirmed, the recipients can never pose as though they never received the mail in the first place. Having added another dimension to its utility thus, emails are likely to grow in popularity and usage in the times to come. However, before we fall headlong in love with this computer progeny, let us be aware of the pitfalls of using this means of communication so that we not only utilize its immense potentialities but also overcome the challenges posed by the medium.

25.3 EMAIL WRITING—SOME COMMON PITFALLS

Under this section, we will discuss some common pitfalls of email writing.

Privacy is lost Since emails are sent through an Internet facility, a system administrator can always reach our mails. If required, a company's system operator can intercept our mails, disclose our mail to others, and can read whatever we regard as secret and personal. A more serious fallout of this vulnerability of the system can present itself in a misfortune, as some hacker may get into our computer system and can send some undesirable mails from our account. A terrorist breaking into innocent people's account and shooting terror mails through it is not something we are unaware of now. At times, hackers and other swindlers approach us through an apparently innocuous mail in which they require us to fill-in some form and reveal to us the information related to our bank accounts, credit cards, ATMs, voter ID cards, PAN card, etc. Making any such detail available to others may turn out be extremely perilous as it may land us in some unforeseen crisis.

Casualness creeps in Owing to an implied sense of informality that we tend to experience while communicating through an online means, a sort of casualness creeps in our attitude as soon as we plan to send an email message to someone. As already suggested, though this casualness may at times be purposeful and intended, not every message we compose online can afford to sound casual or informal in tone. However, because of the impact of the medium chosen, we see messages swarmed with emoticons, abbreviations, non-standard spellings, and choppy and chatty sentence structures. The real tragedy occurs when the authors tend to forget the distinction between a formal and an informal mail, and end up writing in a colloquial language what needs to be corresponded in a proper professional manner.

Ambiguity impairs communication With the enormous popularity of the electronic medium of expression, the number of people writing and reading emails in their day-to-day professional interactions has grown manifold in the recent past. However, since there are no universally or traditionally accepted conventions in email writings, people tend to write the way they want. Therefore, most of us end up writing casually, informally, colloquially, and hence ineffectively when faced with the task of composing a mail. This habit of casualness is further bolstered as sending messages through mobile has also become a way of life. Because of this, *texting* a message seems like an ability required to be developed rather than a bad norm which needs to be avoided. Writing in such an anarchic *free style* however can seriously impair the efficacy of our message as reading through our colloquial, chatty, and abbreviated text, the reader feels

Unsolicited Emails can Clog Your Mailbox

baffled, intrigued, and confused. A message, if not understood well by the reader, is in any case of little significance because only a partial misunderstanding can result from a message that is not clear enough to the reader.

Virtue is sacrificed to convenience Language is an expression of a culture in communication. Since the online culture promotes a racy, pushy, and jerky way of self-expression, we come across emails that seem to move without a compass. Since many of the email writers are quite used to short, quick, and abbreviated versions, they find it difficult to write in an elaborate sentence structure and we come across messages which hardly seem to make sense to us. All such writers compose their mails governed more by the fad rather than the serious intent behind writing the message.

Moreover, since a proper convention has not yet emerged in email writings, people write in acronyms; abbreviate their subject lines beyond a point of comprehension; forget to add courteous salutations in the beginning; or add a complimentary close at the end and make the entire piece of communication seem like a jigsaw puzzle. Because of this, the reader has to not just read what is written but also assume what is deliberately or inadvertently left out.

Junkyard is always full An undesirable offshoot of email communication, that is, receiving unsolicited and unrelated mails, is a very common nuisance that people encounter. Since sending an email does not take time, circulating a copy also becomes an easy option. Since everything is just 'a click away', many writers unmindfully send a copy of their messages even to those people who are not concerned with the information in any way. So, a production unit manager may get a mail asking him to 'furnish the sales details at the earliest', the quality control head to 'provide a list of those who fail report in time more than thrice a month in the sales division', and so on and so forth. All such unrelated mails infuriate business professionals and can even lead to loss of temper or open confrontation between individuals.

25.4 EMAIL WRITING—GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMPOSITION

As suggested earlier, emails are pieces of communication with quite a few chinks in the armour. Moreover, due to the lack of a settled convention, it becomes a challenge to compose a mail that is proper in all respects. Following are some of the principles following which we can cast our emails in an effective manner:

Avoid being abrupt Read the beginning of the following email:

Hi,

Meeting likely to postpone. Call before you start.

V.K.Sarkar

A message like this might bring relief to someone who does not want to attend the meeting! However, reading this gives us a feeling as though the author wrote it sitting on the edge of his chair before leaving for something else. It does not leave a proper impact on the reader and also leaves him/her wondering about the information which such writings generally do not convey. Consider an alternative way of communicating the same message:

Dear Members,

Due to some other pressing matter, the meeting regarding revision of draft proposal is likely to be postponed. Our office will call you up to let you know about the revised schedule for the meeting somewhere around 5.00 p.m.

Sorry for the inconvenience.

V.K. Sarkar

Use subject lines effectively While composing an email, we normally do not give any importance to the subject line at all. Hardly anyone thinks about the subject of their message before shooting it off from their mail box. Many a time, it is the automatically generated reminder 'would you like your message to be sent without a subject?' which draws the attention of the author to the fact that he/she should also attach a subject to the content he/she plans to send. This itself suggests what little worth we assign to choosing an appropriate subject line to our message. Observed seriously, however, we realize that the subject line of the message is as important as the message itself. A subject line lets your reader form a proper idea about the message he/she is likely to see in the mail. Since the reader is likely to see the subject line as soon as he/she opens the mailbox, a proper subject line is likely to stimulate the reader while a message introduced through a poorly worded subject line is most likely to be ignored by a busy professional. Also keep in mind that a proper subject line helps the recipient of the mail in the filing process. Here are some of the subject lines extracted from professional emails. See how the revised subject lines add to the worth of the message:

Original	Revised
Meeting	Schedule for the Meeting Tomorrow
Fancy Dress Competition	Inviting Entries for Fancy Dress Competition
Retail Outlet	Announcement Regarding Retail Outlet
Just Like That	Exchanging Pleasantries
My Mobile Number has Changed!	Change in Mobile Number
Re: Delay	Re: Delay in Consignment Delivery
Absenteeism	Overcoming Absenteeism

Start courteously Regarding emails, there is a serious misconception that they are informal pieces of interaction and hence courtesy is not much desired. It is a misconception of this sort that leads to an email message like this:

> Madam
>
> Have you received any communication from marketing guys? If yes, please kick the mail back. You know I am dying to listen to them.
>
> MKN

A message like this is only going to be scorned by the reader, particularly if he/she is senior to the person who has sent him/her the mail and expects him/her to 'kick the mail back', as he/she is 'dying to listen to them'. The whole message is shorn of courtesy and decorum and evokes confusion as well as contempt on the part of the reader as it hurts a person's professional dignity, besides bemusing him/her.

See the revised version of this mail and observe how the same message seems upright and dignified:

> Dear Madam,
>
> Kindly let me know if you are aware of the schedule for the talk by the Marketing personnel. Being from a similar field, I am very keen to hear what they have to say.
>
> Thanks and regards,
>
> Mani Kumar Nayak

While writing an email, keep in mind that though a degree of informality is essentially part and parcel of such communications, disregarding courtesy and politeness is certainly not desirable.

Add a warm-up sentence Consider the beginning of an email:

> Dear Chaitnya,
>
> No issues with the proposal sent. We'll clear it in the meeting this evening.
>
> Aninda

A message such as this hardly appears to be professional. While composing an email communication, we need to understand that though it is sent over an electronic medium, it is after all a professional piece of writing if used in professional communication situations. Therefore, the style of an email should not essentially differ much from that of a business letter. Though email writings make room for more informality and seem quite intimate and personal at times, it is not advisable to start in a manner that seems abrupt, unofficial, and jerky. In fact, it is more appropriate to start, particularly a professional email, with a warm-up sentence to fix the context and set the tone of the message. Take a look, for instance, at the revised beginning of the email we have just read and realize how by providing a proper beginning assigns to the message, the tone and tenor that it needs to display:

Dear Chaitnya,

Thank you very much for sending the proposal. It seems fine and will most likely be approved in the meeting scheduled this evening. I'll let you know about the final decision of the committee after the meeting.

With best wishes,

Aninda

Go through another such instance where an introductory sentence is almost unavoidable and the whole message struggles in the absence of it:

Dear Mr Chairperson

Keeping quite busy; can't attend the meeting scheduled next week.

I.C. Sharma

Board Member

A message like this certainly conveys the message but rings like a blunt, crude, and bad news to the reader. In professional situations, starting without fixing the context leads to crudity of expression and a message devoid of it seems far too sudden to be appreciated. See the revised version of the same email:

Dear Mr Chairperson,

Thank you very much for informing me about the Board Meeting scheduled in the next week. However, due to some other pressing urgent matters, it would not be possible for me to attend the same. Nevertheless, I would be available online and can be consulted for any crucial decision that requires my view.

Wish you all the best for the meeting and look forward to receiving the Minutes for the same.

Yours truly,

I.C. Sharma

Board Member

While writing an email, we need to understand that it is not in any way a less human interaction. In fact, simply because it combines the features both of a written and oral communication, it needs to sound all the more personal, warm, and interactive. Of course, we need not talk like a machine—something that we should not do even while writing a business letter, a formal report, a research article, or a technical proposal—in composing an email. However, rather than starting with an intrusive statement, we need to build a rapport with the reader through an introductory, warm-up sentence or fix the context in some other way before communicating the intended idea. Given below are some such introducers which, when used, are likely to make a message sound more professional, decorous, and appropriate:

1. It was as usual a pleasure talking to you. Your suggestion for introducing...
2. Thank you very much for showing an interest in our agency. However, because of...

3. We have gone through the brochure sent to us. We believe that we can go for...
4. It was nice to have heard from you after such a long time. It seems you have shaped up really well as a...
5. Thanks indeed for informing me about the concert. It would be an added delight if...
6. As you are aware of the fact that we are in the process of changing our nomenclature, it may take some time for us to look into...
7. Thanks for calling last evening. We are going to sit on this in the afternoon...
8. I hope this finds you in the best of health and spirits...
9. Thanks for your enquiry. However, as per company policy...
10. The meeting for rescheduling the conference is being planned. It would be appreciated if you can return the enclosed form with details...

Avoid all capital letters At times the mails received read like this:

> ALL CONCERNED ARE REQUIRED TO TURN OFF THE LIGHTS BEFORE LEAVING THE CONFERENCE ROOM AFTER THE MEETING. TIME AND AGAIN IT IS OBSERVED THAT THE FANS AND TUBELIGHTS ARE ON WELL AFTER THE MEETING IS OVER. LOSS OF ELECTRICITY IS LOSS OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND INCURS COST TO BOTH COMPANY AND NATION.
>
> CHIEF (MAINTENANCE)

Reading such a mail gives you a feeling as though the writer is actually screaming while writing this mail. Though the highlighted matter is really worthy of a concern and the author of the mail deserves our appreciation for bringing it to the notice of others, the tone in which it is written is certainly not appropriate. Moreover, the use of capital words all through the text makes the message seem rather intimidating. Again, lack of courtesy in the language and absence of salutation in the beginning instills in the message a sense of bluntness.

Use proper spellings A large number of emails are written in the spirit of a message on a mobile. Just as on a mobile a message can accommodate a certain number of words, writers composing emails perform under a compulsive urge to be concise and brief. Of course, writing in a brief and concise manner is certainly an achievement. After all, brevity is the soul of wit. However, overdoing this can lead to confusion; particularly so, when people start chopping letters from certain words and trimming their spellings beyond a degree of acceptability. Remember, many of the emails we write are part of our professional communication and carry the image of the organization we represent. Writing in a fashionable 'email shorthand' can get us in some serious professional embarrassment. Imagine, for instance, the impression that an email like this is going to create on the reader:

> Hi all,
>
> V r intrstd in buying the latest heatconverter launched by ur company. r u ready with supplies? Pl specify schdl of delivery 4 v 8t waiting wons the deal is thru.
>
> VKR
>
> for Toto Syringe Pvt Ltd, Hyderabad

Frankly speaking, except the title of the company at the bottom, hardly anything else seems worthy of a professional communication. Writing in such a fashion is most likely to create only a comic

effect on the reader. Such crippled spellings can never create a robust impact on the recipient of the mail. Writing in such a manner can lose one's credibility as well as show in poor light the organization one represents. See the revised version of this email to steer clear of such obnoxious trappings:

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are interested in purchasing the latest Heat Convertor (Model CCS 1232), launched recently by your company. We would like to understand whether the product is ready to be supplied. Kindly let us know how much it would take for you to send the consignment once we place an order.

Thanks and soliciting an early reply,

Yours truly,

Vikram Reddy

Purchase Coordinator

for Toto Syringe Pvt Ltd., Hyderabad

Avoid acronyms Acronyms are shortened replacements for certain words, terms, persons, and objects. Youths take fancy to such abbreviations as for them it is really exciting to refer to Instructor-in-Charge as IC; Comprehensive Examination as COMPREE; All Night Canteen as ANK; Students Activity Centre as SAK; Sarvjanik Hospital as SAARVI and so on and so forth. Truncating a name gives our youth a sense of omnipotence and usually such terms become popular in all segments of society. After all, who is not aware of the meaning of ISBT, and ITO in Delhi? Using a well known acronym is not a taboo in emails. However, most of our young communicators do not wait for an acronym to become well recognized and easily understood and almost everyday push new coinages replacing a large number of expressions. Since the meaning and significance of many such acronyms are known only to a few 'chosen ones', it is not possible for all those who receive an email which is full of such acronyms to make sense of something that leaves them completely baffled at reading something like this:

Hi Sid,

Wud u mind passing me FAQ? I'll wait at BC 4 u EOL. BTW, REPREE Tuts were gr8.

TVM & BFN

KK

A message like this is not less than a crossword puzzle for a person who is not aware of the unnaturally and forcibly formed acronyms. See the revised version and observe what it was all about:

Hello Siddharth (Sid)

Would you mind passing on to me the list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) distributed in the class yesterday? If possible, please come to the Bank Canteen (BC) after the lecture. I'll wait for you there at around 2.00 PM. By the way, thanks for notes on Report Writing; they were quite useful.

Thanks very much and bye for now.

Karthikeyan

Use emoticons and smileys sparingly Besides crippled spellings, jargons, and acronyms, what abound emails these days are the various types of emoticons and smileys. As we know, emoticons are short symbols carved with or without the help of some keyboard letters. Used in different shapes and shades, emoticons are largely perceived to assign the features of oral communication to the written communication that an email essentially is.

Given below are some of the commonly employed emoticons:

☺ A happy face suggesting joy and humour
☹ A sad face suggesting unhappiness or sadness
@ An expression suggestive of shock and surprise
O An expression suggesting realization of an error

There is no harm in using such emoticons and smileys while writing mails to our friends and to those with whom we share an intimate relation. Such fads however need to be restricted in professional communication as they are too personal to find a place in a formal piece of communication. Remember to keep the following before using any emoticon:

- Relationship with the reader
- The gravity of the subject matter
- The occasion

Take care of punctuation marks Taking a leaf from mobile messages where many find it difficult to locate and apply punctuation rules, many writers of email communication write without giving any thought to punctuation marks. Therefore, it is not just that letters are omitted, acronyms are chosen, and abbreviated forms are written, but also that many letters are written in lower case even after a full stop. An example of this sort would put the matter in proper perspective:

dear mohit,

I heard dr chawla speak the other day in a workshop. the guy talks sense. looks like we can get him to talk to our staff and even workers. after all stress related issues r getting complex it would be nice to have a psychiatric addressing such issues. kick it back with what u see in this.

malhotra

It seems the author has thrown overboard all the rules learnt in the grammar class. A message like this only seems like a truncated mess. As the author does not choose to write the letters that follow a full stop in capital form, the whole text appears to be haphazard and amorphous besides being ungrammatical. Hope one chooses to write the same thing something like this:

Dear Mohit,

I heard Dr Chawla speak the other day in a workshop on Stress Management. It was a very informative and impressive talk as Dr Chawla brought to the fore the complexities of work-related environment that lead to stress in professional situations. I would suggest arranging a talk by Dr Chawla in our

(Contd)

organization as well. We all realize the mounting stress that all our employees and workers experience from time to time. Though we keep counselling our staff, a talk by Dr Chawla, a practicing psychiatrist, would help all of us negotiate the complex issue of stress management in a more effective manner. Please let me know your views on this.

Thanks,

Smriti Malhotra
Sr Manager—HR

Use salutations and complimentary close A growing sense of casualness generally accounts for the absence of proper salutations in the beginning and omission of complimentary close at the end of an email. However, without all such professionally mandatory etiquette, an email sounds abrupt, curt, and shorn of hospitality. Here are some of the suggested salutations and complimentary close which generally make our diction appear decent and graceful:

Some common salutations

1. Dear Dr...
2. Dear Mr/Mrs...
3. Dear Ms...
4. Dear Sir/Madam
5. Dear Colleagues
6. Dear Friends
7. Dear Customer
8. Dear Reader
9. My Dear...

Some common complimentary close

1. Thanks and regards
2. Best wishes
3. With best wishes
4. With deep personal regards
5. With warm regards
6. Best regards
7. Bye for now
8. Good bye
9. With love
10. Love
11. Look forward to receiving a mail soon
12. Look forward to seeing you at the meeting
13. Soliciting an early reply
14. Please call me, or send a mail, if I can be of some help to you
15. Please let me know how I can be of some help to you
16. Your enquiries are always welcome
17. Feel free to call anytime
18. Call me up; should there be a need

Identify yourself Keeping with an undesirable habit prevalent in email writings, at times some writers do not identify themselves properly. We come across short, abbreviated names or sometimes some initials and nicknames as can be seen at the end of the email message cited below:

Dear Sush,

Pl return the files marked with corrections and suggestions. This needs to be incorptd. in the bulletin today.

PK

Despite an empathetic understanding on the reader's part, such choppy and amateurish prose can hardly be seen as a piece of professional writing. Moreover, addressing the recipient of the mail with a nickname and rounding off the mail with initials suggests a scorn for convention and a callously perfunctory approach towards the entire process of reading and writing.

Moreover, as already suggested, professional emails are now used for official and legal purposes. So, not writing a proper name at the end of a message that you compose is like sending a cheque without signing it. Therefore, let us not be in a hurry to dash off emails without bothering about whether the reader understands what we write and, of course, who we are in the first place. Take a look at the revised version to understand how a serious message had been reduced to a juvenile farce in the original version:

Dear Sushmita,

As discussed telephonically, please return the files marked with corrections and suggestions as soon as you complete the task. As all these suggestions and corrections are to be incorporated in the Bulletin today itself, please give top priority to it treating it as most urgent.

Thanks and regards,

Prabhat Kashyap

Editor-in-Chief

25.5 EMAIL WRITING—MAINTAINING COMMON ETIQUETTE

Besides following the guiding principles while composing an email, we also need to observe some common etiquette while maintaining and operating an email account.

Reply immediately Generally emails are used to suggest that the matter needs urgent attention and action on the part of the recipient. Therefore, those who send an email expect getting a reply within a day or two, if not immediately. Hence, it is advisable that the mails we receive as a professional are answered immediately or as soon as possible. If the matter needs a detailed perusal, consideration, or some other time consuming action, we need to send an interim reply acknowledging the receipt of the message and assuring detailed response later on.

Avoid circulating emails to everyone Since it does not take much to shoot the copy of a mail already composed, it is seen that at times we end up circulating our emails even to those who are remotely or hardly concerned with the information. A tendency such as this is certainly uncalled for as receiving an unnecessary mail is a needless nuisance and it generally irritates a busy professional. Therefore, avoid sending a copy of the mail to all and sundry. Send the copy of a mail only to those who have something to do with the mail. Also remember to click 'bcc' instead of 'cc' in case you intend to forward the copy of your mail to someone without letting other recipients know about it.

Avoid attaching unnecessary files At times, email writers do not really judge what the reader actually requires to read and attach unnecessary files to the mail. One reason for this practice is the fact that attaching a file is again just 'a click away' on the Internet. Moreover, by sending all the material, some writers believe that they can dispose of the matter without exerting much. However, just as receiving an unnecessary mail is a nuisance, so is an unrelated file that requires the reader to read through the material that has little relevance to him/her. Sending an irrelevant file not only suggests a sloppy attitude on the part of the writer, but also offends the reader as it consumes time on his/her part unnecessarily. In the jet age of ours, robbing someone of their precious time is almost like committing a crime and the writers who attach redundant material to their mails are seriously despised.

Answer all queries At times, we get mails seeking clarification on certain issues. While answering such mails, we should try and answer as exhaustively as possible. It would be further advisable that besides answering the questions asked, we also anticipate other possible queries that the reader may raise in future, and answer all such questions. Receiving an answer for questions that are answered even before they are asked makes a reader appreciate the concern and emotional intelligence shown by the writer. This certainly helps us display our caring attitude for others and generates a sense of gratitude in them. All this strengthens our professional image and adds to the goodwill of the organization we work for.

Avoid sexist language Gone are the days when one would happily harp on a saying like *man is mortal* and hope to suggest a universal human frailty. In modern times, saying 'man is mortal' can also imply that 'woman is not so', for today what applies to man may not necessarily apply to woman. It is so because in an age of feminist quest for equality, a woman aspires to pursue and maintain a distinct identity of her own. Therefore, writing in a sexist language could turn a female reader off. Consider, for instance, an email such as this:

Dear Customer

Remember to use your ID while contacting us. Enquiries from someone who does not use his Unique ID No. (UIN), would not be entertained.

Manager

Customer Care

In earlier times, it was a general practice to refer to everyone with a masculine pronoun 'he'. Now of course, we write in a tone and style that is suggestive of gender neutrality on our part. Therefore, avoid such sexist overtones in email writings too. Choose either 'he/she' or use the plural forms of pronouns such as they, them, their, etc.

Be aware of email jargon Jargon refers to the technical language used in a particular field of study. Like every other domain, email writings have also developed a jargon of their own. However, using a jargon is not something that makes us understood well. Thus, we need to restrain ourselves and keep its use to the minimum. Nevertheless, we need to be acquainted with the common jargon used by email writers so that we are aware of the meaning of the terminology employed. Given below is the list of the jargon commonly used in email writings:

Bot: A part of software that acts on behalf of a human.
Mailbot: A piece of software that automatically replies to an email.
Listbot: A piece of software that manages the distribution list.
Bounce: A message that returns to the sender because of some configuration problem or because of some error in typing the address of the receiver's address.
Ping: A test to see whether the other person is available online.
Lurk: To read messages anonymously
Spam: Unsolicited emails sent to many people simultaneously; used mainly as commercial advertisements.
Flame: Emails that contain hostile message.

Keep your mail box uncluttered Just as a writing desk needs to be kept spic and span, we need to pay careful attention to the fact that we delete the junk mails regularly from our mail account. A cluttered mail box is difficult to navigate and becomes unwieldy at times for looking through an email box running into thousands of messages consumes time unnecessarily and also leads to confusion at times. Ideally we should delete all the redundant messages. However, the messages that we need to refer to in future and are likely to be used for record purposes should not be deleted.

Read and edit your mails One reason why we get to read sloppy, choppy, and ungrammatical structures in emails is lack of revision and editing on the writer's part. Since most of us believe email writing to be a part of informal piece of writing, it is customary that a writer shoots the mail as soon as he/she finishes composing it. This attitude leads to perfunctory and casual writing, which helps neither the writer nor the reader. We must bear in mind that email writings too are a part of our professional communication and just as every other professional writing needs to be revised and edited, so do the emails that we write. With revision and editing we can really compose emails which are polished and effective.

25.6 BLOG WRITING

Blog, also known as *weblog*, is a very popular platform for expressing some ideas, views and opinions. Blogs, like other social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, provide a common place where everyone can put his/her views on any topic. It allows individuals to write quickly; express freely and publish their views on any subject via the Internet; and, in the process, connect with thousands of people from all over the world.

For blog writers, there are a number of free websites available, such as *Wordpress*, *Tumblr*, *TypePad, Myspace* and *Blogger.* All of them offer free design themes so that you can customize your own blog. They have now been converted into a hugely effective marketing and communication tools for academia and businesses as well. In fact, teachers use blogs for teaching effective writing, critical thinking and analytical skills to students. Recruiters also look at your blogs and try to assess your personality and skills.

After discussing the relevance of blogs, let us pick up some tips for successful blogging.

- Choose a blogging platform and customize your own blog. And if you are not sure how to use them, a plenty of online video tutorials can be found on the web which can help you start your own blog.
- When you start a free blog, make sure you provide the weblinks connecting to your artistic portfolio such as photostoart, *valuemystuff, valsparpaint* etc.
- While choosing a topic to write about, try and find a niche for yourself. Make your blog about something very specific and you will please both the search engines and your readers.
- Find a topic you are comfortable with and write about that.
- If you want your blog to be read by many people, offer value by talking about your views on current issues, your perspective on life or your experiences.
- Get people talking on your blog by asking them to add their comments.
- Make commenting easily possible and write about the stuff that gets people talking positively. If people can interact on your blog, they'll keep coming back for more.
- Occasionally you may get odd or negative comment on your blog; in that case, you should not feel put off or stop blogging.
- While writing a creative blog, remember to use relevant images to make your web page look attractive.

- Try to keep your articles as quickly readable as possible.
- Assign such titles to your articles that are appealing and catchy; also when people search for them through search engines, your titles get easy and quick attention.
- Try to keep the layout of your blog clean, fresh and uncluttered. Avoid adding lots of unnecessary features.
- Do not neglect social media if you are a blogger. Update your followers and fans with your latest post on Twitter and Facebook as well.
- Since people want to follow a person, and not a brand, include an "about" section if possible, and a photograph of yourself. By offering a personal slant, you will be encouraging people to like your blog posts.
- Promote your best blog posts in your email newsletter.
- Try and keep your blog updated with atleast two articles in about a week.
- Finally, before you hit the "publish" button, it is crucial to check the spelling and proofread your article again and again as bad spellings and grammar will not only ruin your credibility but will also turn many a reader away from your blogs.

RECAPITULATION

✓ Email writings have become quite popular in our everyday interactions. Even in the professional world, emails are now widely recognized as an important tool of official communication.

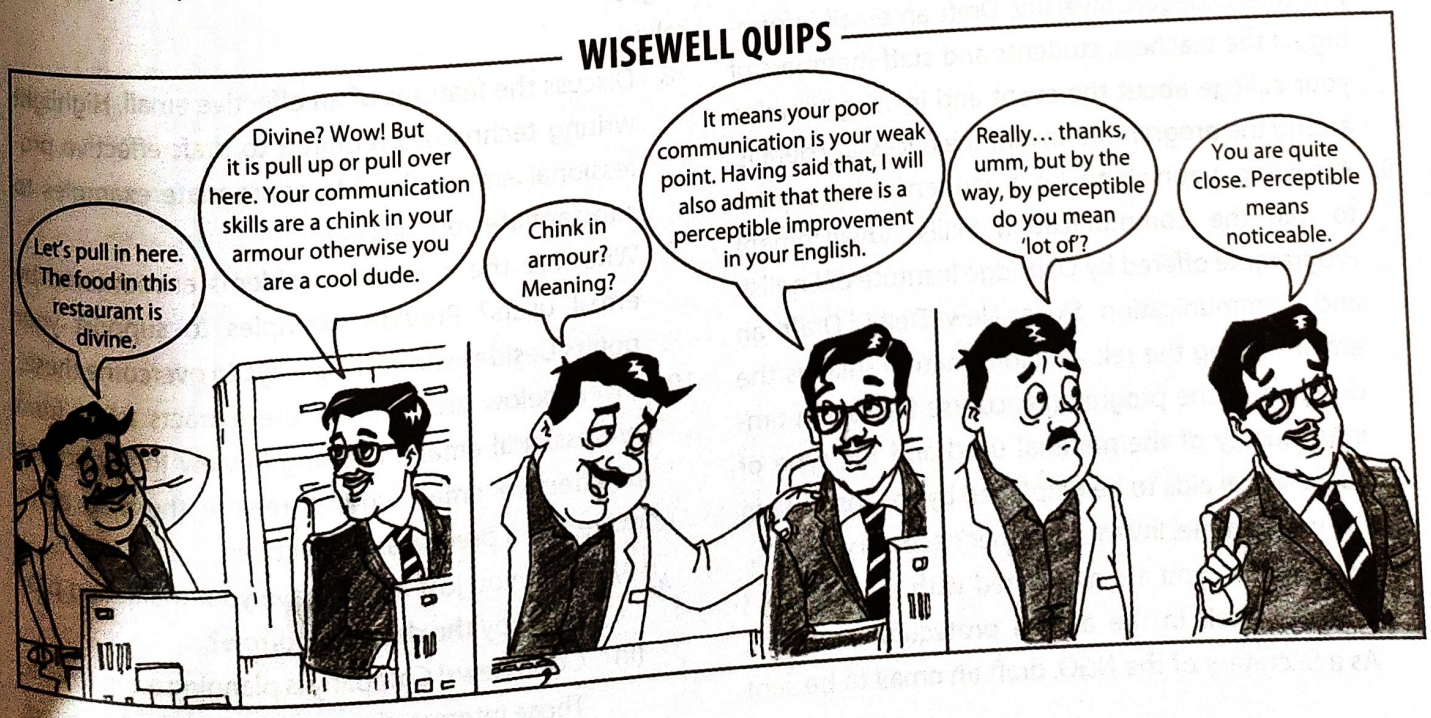
✓ As an email is regarded as an informal piece of writing, many a time the emails composed and received by us are ungrammatical, abrupt, blunt, and unprofessional in many other ways.

✓ Since emails are also as important as other forms of professional communication, we need to observe the principles of effectiveness such as clarity, courtesy, specificity, grammatical accuracy, and proper beginnings and endings in our emails.

✓ In order to draft effective and professional emails, we need to overcome common pitfalls such as abruptness, lack of punctuations, poor spellings, abundance of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon, use of sexist language, etc.

✓ Blogs like Twitter and Facebook provide a platform to express your views on any topic. Effective blogging adds a valuable dimension to your personality.

WISEWELL QUIPS



EXERCISES

1. State whether the following statements are true or false.
   (a) Email writing is informal and no grammatical rules are required to be observed while composing it.
   (b) Email writing is quite frequently used in professional communication these days.
   (c) The expression 'Yours truly' is an example of complimentary close in an email writing.
   (d) The expression 'Dear Sir/Madam' is an example of a salutation in email writing
   (e) Since an urgent email requires immediate attention, we must choose to write the entire text in capital letters.
   (f) In order not to sound abrupt, one may consider starting an email with an introductory, warm up sentence.
   (g) In email jargon 'flame' refers to the mail that doesn't reach the recipient well in time.
   (h) While composing an email, we must choose different cases of masculine noun such as *he*, *him* and *his* for those persons whose gender we are unaware of.
   (i) Since email writings are informal in nature, we need not worry about grammar and punctuations while composing them.
2. Assume that as the Cultural Secretary, you are organizing a flute recitation programme in your Institute/College/University. Draft an email informing all the teachers, students and staff members of your college about the event and inviting them to attend the programme. Invent the necessary details.
3. Assuming yourself to be a student who aspires to join the Communication Skills Advancement Programme offered by Oxbridge Institute of English and Communication Skills, New Delhi. Draft an email seeking the relevant information such as the duration of the programme, course fee, batch timings, quality of the material used and the type of audio-visual aids to be employed by the Institute in the programme. Invent the other necessary details.
4. Assume that you are associated with an NGO that engages itself in the animal protection activities. As a Secretary of the NGO, draft an email to be sent across. Urging people to come forward and join hands in the noble cause, your email should have the required elements of emotional appeal and persuasion.
5. Assume that recently you have purchased a dishwasher from Modern Electrical Equipments, Bhopal. The appliance has not performed upto your expectations. Draft an email informing the company about the cause of your dissatisfaction and seek an appropriate replacement/claim in this regard.
6. Assume that the bank that you work for has decided to freeze all the savings accounts which have remained inoperative for the past two years. Assuming yourself to the Manager (Customer Care), draft an email to be sent to all concerned.
7. Given below is an email. Inventing the other necessary details and keeping in mind the principles of effective email writing, rewrite this mail so as to make it look professional, specific, and effective:

Hi rakki

Hope you rember 2 days be4 v organized a PAARTY to honor the retiring Taneja Sir. It was fun no dout. But Acounts Guys want an auditing on the expenses. Hope u have kept all vouchers, bills intact. Shoot back a reply detailing all the expenses incurred. Would appreciate if the detailing includes ref. to exact figures, rcpt. number, date and budget head for all expenses.

b.rgds

salvi

8. Discuss the features of an effective email. Highlight writing techniques required to draft effective professional emails. Provide appropriate examples to substantiate your answer.
9. What are the common problems encountered by email users? Provide examples to support your points besides suggesting ways to overcome these.
10. Given below are some of the extracts taken from professional emails. Keeping in view the principles of effective email writing, rewrite them so as to make them precise and effective:
    (i) Wud you just let me have your marketing proposal by the dawn tomorrow?
    (ii) Good news! Company is planning a trip to Goa. Those interested may contact the undersigned.

(iii) Queried some respondents. Seems they had problems filling out the detailed query sheets. Let's keep the queries to the minimum and resend.

(iv) Find enclosed in the attached files the new customer friendly on-line travel guide. Kick back the same to us with your ticked options and we'll arrange the rest.

(v) Meeting sched at three. Drop in with sales recds.

(vi) SORRY TO ANNOUNCE THE SAD DEMISE OF MR BLOCKHEAD JEJUNE. CONDOLENCE MEETING TO BE HELD AT 11 PM IN THE PORTICO IN FRONT OF PLANT C.

(vii) Proposal returned herewith. Redo cost estimate. Call back if wanted.

(viii) don't send employee review package plan. mgt following promotion scheme of empallo.

(ix) We introduce ourselves as one of the leading sports company in the company. Have a look at the attached catalog and mail us about ur dream sport paraphernalia today!

(x) read ur mail and appointment letter. thanks.

11. Given below is the text of an email. Revise it so as to make it effective in terms of grammar, usage, capitalization and punctuation marks:

love is sth that makes mee happeee ... u know it makes u think its ok if nothing else is going rite for u but u have got someone to live for...that's the grandee feeling we need...isn't it? ...but sometimes love make you feel it is one of the magic of god to forgot the real meaning of life...anyways...who bothers... iam happy in love and feels great to hv found my soulmate...i don't care abt meaning of life and all that serious crap people use their life in and keep a serious face all the time.

12. Prepare a draft in about 150 words on any of the following topics to post on your blog:

(a) Recent floods in Kashmir
(b) World Cup 2015
(c) Your first meeting with your beloved
(d) Cultural Diversity in India
(e) Thousand Invisible Strings in life
(f) Life beyond consciousness
(g) Your views on the recent book you read or movie you watched
(h) Recent earthquake in Nepal

ANSWER KEY

1. (a) False (b) True (c) True (d) True (e) False (f) True (g) False (h) False (i) False