

Email Writing

After studying this module, you will be able to:

- understand the nuances of email writing
- get acquainted with different types of email

What is email?

It means messages distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network. Whether you're an up-and-coming young professional or a seasoned manager, email writing is a vital aspect of business communication. And thanks to what's often seen as the mysteries of English grammar and the subtleties of the written word, it can be a daily struggle. That's especially true if you have to motivate busy people to respond or address a potentially touchy subject. To write a great email, you need to know two things: common mistakes to avoid, and next-level strategies to get ahead. Email stands for electronic mail. It is the easiest and the cheapest way of communication. It is used in formal, semi-formal as well as an informal way of expression or writing.

Anatomy of a good email

Every email you write has the same basic structure: Subject line, greeting, email body, and closing. But as with every written form of professional communication, there's a right way to do it and standards that should be followed. Here's how to write a proper email:

Subject line

The subject line could be the most important part of the email, though it's often overlooked in favour of the email body. But if you're cold-emailing someone, or just establishing a professional relationship, your subject line can entice people to open the message as well as set expectations about what's enclosed. On the other hand, a poorly crafted or generic subject line (like "Hi" or "You don't want to miss those") can deter the reader and result in your email landing in the spam folder.

“Spend double the amount of time crafting the right subject line as you do on the [body] because if they don’t open the email, it doesn’t matter,” says Cole Schafer, founder and copy chief of Honey Copy.

Openers

In most email writing situations, you’ll want to include a quick greeting to acknowledge the reader before diving into your main message or request.

The exception: When you’re on an email chain with close colleagues, it often becomes more natural to drop the opener (as well as the closing). Though it may initially feel like a faux pas, it signals a better professional rapport.

Body

The body of an email is the meat of your message, and it must have a clear and specific purpose, such as getting feedback on a presentation or arranging a meeting with a new client. It should also be concise. That way, people will be more inclined to read it, rather than skimming it and risking missing critical information. If you can, boil it down to a few choice sentences.

And for emails that require more length and detail, keep it as focused as you can. “Nobody wants to receive a novel. You want to keep it between three, four, or five lines of text,” says Schafer.

Closings

Just as you want to start things off on the right foot with your greeting, you also want to part well. That means writing a friendly sign-off. And there are plenty of options to choose from. You’ll want to choose a closing that feels genuine to your personality and tailor it to the relationship to ensure an appropriate level of professionalism. On the other hand, common closings like “love,” “sent from iPhone,” or “thx,” may be best left unused in professional emails.

MOST FREQUENT EMAIL SIGN-OFFS

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. thanks | 7. cheers |
| 2. best | 8. all the best |
| 3. regards | 9. best wishes |
| 4. sincerely | 10. respectfully |
| 5. take care | 11. talk soon |
| 6. thanks so much | 12. sincerely yours |

Common email writing mistakes (and what to do instead)

Just as every email is an opportunity for professional growth, there's also the potential to fall into common email writing bad habits. Here are eight mistakes to avoid:

Omitting necessary Oxford commas

The Oxford comma can be somewhat polarizing when thinking about how to write a proper email, depending on which style guide is utilized for professional communications in your industry—it's usually either shunned or hailed as a tool for clarification. Either way, a lot of people have strong opinions about it. But leaving them out can lead to confusion, depending on the sentence.

What to do instead: While the Oxford comma may not be suitable in certain contexts, it's usually a good idea to use them in emails. That's because it can help you save time and avoid miscommunication, confusion, and even legal trouble.

Hedging

It means to use ambiguous statements. Contrary to popular belief, hedging language makes you sound less confident, which can ultimately undermine your writing.

What to do instead: State your idea or opinion, then explain the "why" behind your reasoning. That way, you'll be better understood and your brilliance can shine through.

Extremely long and/or unclear copy

Would you read an email that was 1,000 words long? Probably not—most people skim emails that are on the long side. And if you add hard-to-follow sentences or mixed messages, to your draft, you're even less likely to get a satisfactory response. (Or any response.) "I get a ton of [emails] that are just these huge blocks of text. And I understand why they do that—so you have enough detail. But it's really hard to read and I'm not going to read the whole thing," says Kat Boogaard, a Wisconsin-based freelance writer.

What to do instead: Keep it concise and focus on the matter at hand. Then end with a call to action, a requested response date, and make it clear that you're open to questions and follow-ups (if that's the case).

Being too casual (or formal)

Depending on your circumstances, wavering too much to the casual or formal side of writing can be a misstep. Being overly casual is often seen as a rookie mistake, but stiff, formal language can also be detrimental to your message.

What to do instead: In striking the perfect balance between formal and casual, the key is thinking about the relationship between yourself and the recipient and take social cues as your communication progresses.

"You kind of want to see what someone else is doing and participate, play along, sort of acknowledge the way communication develops and the way expectations in a relationship develop," says Dan Post Senning, an etiquette expert at the Emily Post Institute.

Note: While GIFs and emojis can be great for creating a sense of comradery between coworkers, these can be seen as overly casual in many contexts. "Be careful in new relationships. The intelligent use of emoticons in emails can help you be more understood. At the same time, a lot of people will read it as unprofessional, so until you've established that relationship, you want to be careful with how you use it. Take care and think about it," says Post Senning.

Clichés

Not all email clichés are cardinal sins. Certain aspects of your emails are bound to be a little formulaic. After all, most emails have the same basic structure, and there are phrases that you may use to ensure clarity or cover your bases. But if you’re going to repeat phrases, make sure they have a clear purpose. As Kiera Wright-Ruiz, a social media manager at Google’s Local Guides puts it, “Even though I always repeat, ‘please let me know if you have any questions,’ I actually do want to know if they have questions.”

EMAIL CLICHES

1. Please find attached
2. Thank you in advance
3. I look forward to hearing from you
4. Per our conversation
5. I hope you are doing well
6. To whom it may concern
7. Sorry for the late reply

What to do instead: Try reading the draft for clichés, tone, and voice to more effectively communicate your message while keeping the reader engaged. Ask yourself: If your boss (or mom) read this email, would you be happy with it? If the answer is yes, then you’re on the right track.

Repetition

People often repeat words within the same paragraph, twice in two sentences, or just too close together to go unnoticed. While it’s not the worst offense, it’s another thing that can make a reader tune out.

WORDS COMMONLY REPEATED

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. only | 8. also | 15. order |
| 2. account | 9. find | 16. still |
| 3. like | 10. just | 17. even |
| 4. always | 11. take | 18. date |
| 5. issue | 12. message | 19. request |
| 6. information | 13. website | 20. cost |
| 7. item | 14. send | 21. report |

What to do instead: Try reading your draft out loud, using the text-to-speech function on your phone, or running it by a colleague before sending it off.

Robotic language

Email may be a descendant of snail mail, but that doesn't mean your messages should sound like an old-timey version of yourself. In fact, emails should sound like the person who is writing it. So, using phrases that sound like something out of a Victorian novel isn't the best move if you want to connect with the reader.

"Let's face it: Nobody wants to read a college textbook. You want to read a blog or an article or a real conversation. They're a person, they're not a robot. So use language that sounds like something you would say if you're just sitting in a coffee shop," says copy chief Schafer.

What to do instead: You can get a more natural effect by pretending you're writing to a friend or having a conversation with a friendly acquaintance. For example, you probably wouldn't say something like, "Greetings" and "I hope the weather is fair where you are" if you were meeting someone for coffee. You'd say something like, "Hi" and "Thanks again for your time."

Overuse of exclamation points!

Enthusiasm is great. But in certain contexts, the overuse of exclamation points can do more harm than good. This is especially true if you're forging a new relationship or contacting someone outside of your company. You are, after all, a representative of your work when you use a company email address. But people love exclamation points, and they're still something

that many people rely on to convey a positive tone. For example, here are the most common sentences and words people use with exclamation points in emails:

SENTENCES WITH ! MARKS

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. thanks! | 1. hello! |
| 2. thank you! | 2. greetings! |
| 3. have a great weekend! | 3. hi! |
| 4. good day! | 4. good morning! |
| 5. hello! | 5. have a great day! |

What to do instead: After you've written your draft, do a quick search for exclamation points and use your judgment to determine which (if any) to keep based on your relationship with the recipient. As a general rule, try to keep it to one or two per email with colleagues.

Tips for effective email writing:

Once you've got the proper email format and you know what mistakes to avoid, it's time to focus on making your drafts stand out from the myriad emails most people get every day. Here are four strategies to take yours to the next level:

Think positive

Sending an email that is remotely negative, or even neutral, can put you in a tricky place. And as with any written communication, there may be room for misinterpretation.

"In the absence of other information, our interpretation often defaults to the negative," explains communication-etiquette expert Post Senning. "When you're talking about negative communication, you're [missing] the information that is tone of voice, the twinkle in your eye, the good humour that you intend something with or even the genuine care or concern with which you're offering critique. So be really careful. When something reads as negative to you, it probably comes across as even more negative to someone else."

Strike the right tone

You wouldn't want to get an email that reads, "Dear [client]," or which references your work in public relations when you're actually in sales, because it would immediately show that the sender is either mass emailing you, or they didn't do the proper research and find the right contact. Similarly, you'll want to make sure that every email you send has a tone that's crafted specifically for the recipient, and that you're sending it to the right person. So even though it may be tempting to use templates, it's important to personalize it and keep in mind the communication style of the recipient before hitting send. To accomplish this, a quick Google search or a peek at the recipient's LinkedIn or Twitter feed can do wonders.

Before sending, try putting yourself in the recipient's shoes for a gut-check on tone and content. And if you have a hard time reading your own tone in email, Grammarly's tone detector can help you determine how you sound to your recipient.

Follow up—in good time

If you're sending an email, you're likely looking for a timely response. But with the large amounts of emails most people sort through each day, things can end up getting lost. As a general rule, a follow-up message should never come less than twenty-four hours after sending the initial email.

In other words: Don't be the person who sends a follow-up request two hours after sending. In extreme cases, that kind of behaviour can even get you blocked. "When you're taking more time and actually caring about the person on the other side of the email, you're immediately going to see a much higher response rate. I had to learn that the hard way," says copy chief Schafer.

Make it easy on the eyes

Most of the messages you send will likely be on the shorter side, which is great for rapid responses and getting things done. But for longer emails, scan ability is the name of the game. That's when things like bolded font, bullet points, underlined sentences, and a TL;DR (too long, didn't read) section come in handy. There are a lot of factors to keep in mind when composing an email, and there's a wide margin of error. But after all is said and done, it isn't about perfection. It's about effective communication. "I think people feel this pressure that you

need to be this perfect communicator with this huge vocabulary and these perfectly structured sentences. And I don't know that that's always the case because you're just two people, communicating," says freelance writer Boogaard.

Categories of Email Writing

Emails are of three types:

1. Semi-Formal email
2. Formal email
3. Informal email

The email writing format is the same for each of the categories. Though the choice of words and language differ depending upon the type of email. One can use friendly and casual language in informal emails. The language used in formal emails should be professional, clear, and formal.

Informal Email Writing Format

An email written for any friends, family members or relatives comes under this category. Use of polite, friendly and casual words along with proper greetings and closings are some of the rules of the informal emails.

Suppose you have to write an email to your friend inviting him or her to your birthday party.

To: XYZ

CC/BCC:

Subject: Invitation to a birthday party

Hi XYZ!

Hope this mail finds you in the best of your time. I am very happy to invite you to my birthday party on Nov 03 at ABC Hotel from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The theme of the birthday party is ‘Pirate of the Caribbean’.

It would be great if you come and join us at the party. We will have a great time and fun together.

See You Soon

LMN

Semi-formal Email Writing Format

An email written for any teammates or colleague is the semi-formal email. One can use friendly language but have to maintain the limit and the decency. The length, proper greetings and closing and clarity are some of the rules of the semi-formal emails.

Writing a letter to inform your classmates regarding intra-college quiz competition.

To: XYZ

CC/BCC:

Subject: Intra-college Quiz Competition.

Hello Everyone!

This is to inform you guys that an intra-college quiz competition is going to be held in our college on Nov 25 from 11:30 am in Hall – 01.

Everyone is therefore asked to take part in the competition so that our department can win.

For further queries, feel free to contact me.

Thanks

LMN

(Class Representative)

Formal Email Writing Format

An email written for business communication or professional use comes under this category. The email written for any government department, school authority, company or any officers are the formal emails. Use of polite and formal words, the reason for writing mail, clarity, proper greeting and closing are some of the rules of the formal email.

A mail for resignation.

To: XYZ

CC/BCC:

Subject: Resignation Letter

Dear Sir,

Please accept this mail as a notice that I am leaving my position with this organization. As per the norm of the company I've to give a month notice before resigning. I hope you will get a good replacement for me within this time period.

I really appreciate the opportunities that I have been given to me to help me grow. Wish you and the company the best in the future.

Please let me know what to expect as far as my final work schedule and the employee benefits. Please let me know in case of any assistance for the above.

Kindly look into the matter.

Thanks, and Regards

LMN

(Project Head)

More examples,

Email expressing your appreciation

To: Recipient's email address

Subject: Congratulations!

Dear (Name),

My heartfelt congratulations to you. I was glad to see your name on the merit list. All your efforts were definitely not in vain. I bet everyone at home is so proud of you.

You have truly honoured the family name, and I am happy that you would get to take up the course in architecture which you had been waiting for. I am waiting to meet you in person to convey all my love and appreciation.

Convey my regards to uncle, aunty and grandpa.

Regards,

Your name

Email about your trip

To: Recipient's mail id

Subject: About my trip

My dear (Name),

I am very excited to write to you about the long tour I will be going on along with my parents. We will be leaving on the 25th.

We will be away for three months. We are going to San Francisco for some official meeting my father has to attend. We would then be travelling to New York to visit our cousins. We would stay there for a month. After that, we would be going to Paris. It has always been my dream to visit Paris at least once in my lifetime, and my parents have finally agreed to take me there. I will definitely write to you all about my trip – all the different places we visit, the variety of food we eat and the people we meet.

It would have been even more special if you had come along with me. We will make sure we plan out a trip once I am back home.

With best wishes,

Your name

Email on seeking information regarding course details

To: Recipient's mail id

Subject: Regarding Course Details

Dear Sir,

I have passed the B.Sc. degree examination with Electronics as the main subject. I intend to have a course in Computer Science and would like to know the details of the courses taught at your institution. Could you please send me a copy of your prospectus?

Yours faithfully,

Your name

Email on introducing a new employee to your team

To: Recipient's mail id

Subject: Meet the New Customer Service Representative

Dear Team,

I am pleased to introduce you to (Name), who is starting today as our Customer Service Representative. She will be providing technical support and assistance to our users and making sure they enjoy the best experience with our products.

Feel free to greet (Name) in person and congratulate her on the new role!

Best regards,

Your name

Designation

Email on official intimation of your resignation

To: Recipient's mail id

Subject: Resignation

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

I am planning to pursue my higher studies in the coming academic year, and hence I would like to inform you of my intention to resign from the post of (Designation) at (Name of the Institution), effective three months from now.

I appreciate the opportunities for growth and development you have provided during my association with (Name of the Institution). It was indeed a privilege working here, and it was a valuable work experience, which has helped me grow personally and professionally to a great extent.

Please accept this letter as the formal intimation of my resignation.

Thank you for your guidance and support.

Yours sincerely,

Your name

Email informing your employees about the change in work timings

To: Recipient's mail id

Subject: Revised Working Hours

Dear Team,

Our company is growing, and there is a good inflow of projects every week. This has been possible with your dedicated and timely teamwork. In order to keep up with this, we have decided that the working hours would be advanced by 30 minutes. The revised time would be 8:30 am to 5 pm. This will be in effect from July 5, 2021 (Monday). It would be appreciated if all of you keep up with the timing and abide by it.

Feel free to come up with suggestions, if any.

Warm regards,

Your name

Designation