

Read the text below and answer Questions 22–27.

Dealing with your office emails

Email has completely changed the way we work today. It offers many benefits and, if used well, can be an excellent tool for improving your own efficiency. Managed badly, though, email can be a waste of valuable time. Statistics indicate that office workers need to wade through an average of more than 30 emails a day. Despite your best efforts, unsolicited email or spam can clutter up the most organised inbox and infect your computer system with viruses. Here we give you guidance on protecting yourself.

Prioritising incoming messages

If you are regularly faced with a large volume of incoming messages, you need to prioritise your inbox to identify which emails are really important. If it is obvious spam, it can be deleted without reading. Then follow these steps for each email:

- Check who the email is from. Were you expecting or hoping to hear from the sender? How quickly do they expect you to respond?
- Check what the email is about. Is the subject urgent? Is it about an issue that falls within your sphere of responsibility, or should it just be forwarded to someone else?
- Has the email been in your inbox for long? Check the message time.

An initial scan like this can help you identify the emails that require your prompt attention. The others can be kept for reading at a more convenient time.

Replying in stages

Having prioritised your emails, you can answer them in stages, first with a brief acknowledgement and then a more detailed follow-up. This is particularly advisable when dealing with complicated matters where you don't want to give a rushed answer. If you decide to do this, tell the recipient a definite date when you'll be able to get back to him or her and try to keep to this wherever possible.

Some emails are uncomplicated and only require a brief, one line answer, so it's a good idea to reply to these immediately. For example, if all you need to say is, 'Yes, I can make the 10.00 meeting', or 'Thanks, that's just the information I needed', do it. If you are unable to reply there and then or choose not to, let the sender know that you've received the message and will be in touch as soon as possible.