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Compare and Contrast: Email vs. Mail

With the advent of new technologies, tradition often gets left behind in the wake. In the age of computers and smartphones, it has become so convenient to communicate with loved ones instantly that taking the time to put pen to paper has lost its appeal to some. So, when an envelope, with handwriting declaring both the sender’s and recipient’s addresses, starts its journey and is carried vast distances, then placed in a mailbox, it brings a little bit of mystery, excitement, maybe even a little touch of fondness upon its arrival. This is why many people still prefer handwritten letters over emails regarding personal correspondence because of the time, devotion, and personal touch required.

First, the appreciation for the time put in displays the importance of the recipient. While email is undeniably good for speedy, critical, time of essence type of communication, there is no consideration for the nuances of packaging and delivery of the letter. There’s no thought about selecting the right pen or paper. The anticipation of waiting for the mail to be delivered doesn’t happen. Exchanging hidden prearranged messages on an envelope, like placing a stamp upside-down to show love to the other person, is impossible with email. There is craftsmanship in letter writing: finding the right paper to write on, pen selection to match the esthetic of the penmanship, and the incredible eloquence flowing from it.

Secondly, sincere communication from one person to another requires devotion. An email will always have a colder feeling partly because of skepticism from being unable to tell if it’s a copy and paste or, even worse, a template used by the sender. There may be some consideration to change the font, but probably not. Emails require so little effort to send that it’s easy to imagine the sender thinking of the recipient as an afterthought. In contrast, preparing a place to sit comfortably and write conveys that the receiver was entirely in the forethought of the writer. Editing a letter adds another layer of devotion in that, at minimum, the edits are laid bare with just a line or scribble through a misplaced word or sentence and, at worst, a pile of crumpled drafts at the writer’s feet. Even though the person receiving that letter doesn’t know it yet, the writer is already connected with them. Someone putting in that kind of time and effort will surely elicit feelings of companionship if not joy.

Finally, the personal touch conveyed through communication is worthy of notice. Hacking is a consideration that could come to mind after receiving a poorly worded email that feels cold and coming from a loved one. Sometimes it’s hard to tell intent from opportunistic miscreants and well-meaning but poorly written electronic communication. A handwritten letter is impossible to hack. It feels secure, intentional, and honest. Feeling the weight of the paper in hand, the smell of ink, and the penmanship of the writer being uniquely their own is almost like hearing their voice speaking quietly in one’s ear. Emotions can quickly be reinforced by adding a spritz of perfume to the page showing romance and intrigue. Confetti hidden between the folded pages adds some surprise and humor. Until email can deliver scent and confetti, mail will remain the best way to correspond through writing with a loved one.

In conclusion, while email has many benefits, such as needing to notify someone about some matter quickly or to inform several people about an urgent issue, it cannot convey the sense of personal connection that a handwritten letter can. The warmth of receiving a letter personally written is much more rewarding than the coolness of words typed using preformatted fonts. The genuineness of the communication from the writer to the receiver is far more stimulating to the senses than an email from a sender.