

Communicating with Your Professors...(and Your Classmates!)



Asking for Permission to Do Something

ASK for permission; don't make statements. Use **modals**. (Depending on the context, an explanation may be necessary.) Ensure that your tone conveys respect and politeness.

Very formal, most polite ↑	<i>Would it be possible for me</i> to submit my assignment next week? <i>Might I</i> submit my assignment next week
Formal, polite ("could" is more polite than "can")	<i>Could I please</i> submit my assignment next week? <i>Can I please</i> submit my assignment next week?
Less formal, polite	<i>Can I</i> submit my assignment next week
Less polite (unacceptable)	<i>I have to</i> submit my assignment next week because... (A statement, not a request for permission) <i>I need</i> an extension. ... (A statement, not a request for permission)
Considered impolite (unacceptable)	<i>Please give me an extension.</i> ("Please" + the imperative = a command or instruction, usually used by someone in authority to someone in a much lower position, e.g., a manager to a low level employee or a parent to a child)
Rude ↓	<i>I want</i> an extension (never use "I want" in a business or professional setting; Canadian children are taught at an early age not to say "I want").

Asking Someone to Do Something for You (Polite Requests)

Use the same modals used for polite requests. Be very careful that the request you make of your professor does not sound like a command.

Very formal, most polite	<i>Would it be possible for you</i> to post the handout on eCentennial? <i>I would appreciate</i> your posting the handout...
Formal, polite	<i>Could you please</i> post the handout on eCentennial?
Less formal, polite	<i>Can you please</i> post the handout on eCentennial?
Unacceptable statement	<i>We need</i> the handout on eCentennial.
Rude (unacceptable)	<i>Please post the handout on eCentennial.</i>
Very rude	<i>We want</i> the handout on eCentennial.

Saying “Thank You”

Your professor and classmates would appreciate your saying thank you when you...

- Get back your work in class
- Receive a handout
- Receive a kindness

Email

- The formal salutation is “Dear”. The professors in the EAP Program permit students to address them by their first names, so when emailing them, use “Dear” plus the first name of your professor. If you do not know the person you are writing to, use “Mr./Mrs./Ms. + **the last name**, not the first names, e.g., “Dear Ms. Sarah” or “Dear Mr. Stephen”.
- Use the same politeness markers as above for all email correspondence to your professors.
- Never use caps, bolding, underlining, exclamation marks, or “ASAP”. These indicate anger, impatience, and a command. These are features are used in public notices, textbooks or other texts to attention to words or phrases.
- Do not use smiley faces. Save this for your friends. Keep your relationship with your professor professional.
- If you are making a request or asking for permission, always end with “thank you”.
- State both your first and last name at the end of the email.

Correcting Emails to Professors

Students sent the emails below to their professors. Correct them for politeness and grammar.

Hey,

I can't attend today's exam because u am sick and I want to go to doctor. Can I get the chance to write the exam later a day please?

(no name stated)

Correction:

Dear _____,

You have not posted the answer key for our last handout. Please post it ASAP!

(first and last name of student)

Correction: