

Email Etiquette

By Laurelyn Irving

Many conflicts arise out of the use of email. There are a number of reasons why this happens. Without the clues one gains from seeing facial expressions, body language or hearing voice inflection, it can be very easy to misinterpret the sender's intent.

As a result, the following list was compiled from various sources on the internet addressing the proper use of email. There are exceptions to these recommendations, but in general, they are good guidelines for avoiding misunderstandings or inappropriate use of email.

Should a misunderstanding occur, pick up the telephone and call the person or visit them in their office. Continuing the discussion in email is likely to continue the miscommunication.

1. Keep emails brief
2. Avoid emotional topics in email
3. Write accurate subject lines
4. Check email threads thoroughly before forwarding them to someone. There may be something in a previous message you or the other person may not want shared.
5. Ask permission before forwarding someone else's email unless it is a mass forward.
6. When in doubt, send plain text email, not rich HTML
7. Be judicious about using "Reply to All". It annoys those who do not need to know.
8. Do not use email for time sensitive notifications. The person may not check their email in time.
9. If you do not want answers like thanks, OK, etc., put No Reply Necessary at the top of your message.
10. All caps means you are shouting
11. Do not put confidential information in email. You lose control of it once it is on the internet.
12. Respond to professional emails within 24 hours if possible.
13. Do not unsubscribe spam. It will only generate more spam.
14. Do not say anything in email you might regret. Think before you hit send.
15. Do not send jokes, especially off color, racist, sexist, etc., ones to professional colleagues. People may be offended or may forward them to someone who may be offended.
16. Work computers are to be used for work emails, not personal ones.
17. Email can provide a 'paper trail' if you need to document discussions. Be aware that others may be using email to document your discussions as well.