



Writing a Professional Email

Handout courtesy of Amber Landis

Overall Formatting

- SPELL CHECK. Spelling or grammar errors detract from professional appearance
- All text should be left aligned, and never indented (tabbed)
- Use one line of space between each text block
- Do not include too many recipients; only those necessary to accomplish request. Copying unnecessary people creates a negative professional image of the sender
- Know the difference between CC (copied recipients clearly listed) and BCC (list of copied recipients hidden from audience)
- Think carefully before using “reply all”
- Do not use colored fonts, all caps, or other excessive amounts of formatting (bold, italics, etc.)
- Be sparing with the use of jokes, anecdotes, emoticons, and exclamation marks
- Consider audience carefully. What do they know, what do they want, how best to appeal to them
- Keep it short and simple! Emails should not be too long or over-explain

Components:

Subject Line

- Use audience consideration to give them the main point of email
- Do not use a complete sentence, the word “I”, or end punctuation. Use proper capitalization

Formal Greeting Line

- Should have its own line, with either “Dear XXX” or just the audience’s name, ending with a comma
- Do not use someone’s first name unless you know them on a personal basis. Use professional or personal title, plus the last name
- Acceptable titles include: Dr., Prof., Mr. or Ms. *Do not address someone by Mrs., unless you know them personally or if they have specifically requested that title to be used*

Introduction Paragraph

- Do not mention your own name in the first line (“My name is XXX XXX.”). Your name will already be clearly mentioned in the sign-off
- Identify who you are to the audience, using specifics (course number and section, account number, etc.)
- Create goodwill with the audience by saying something positive
- End the paragraph summarizing the main point that you are writing about

Body Paragraphs

- Use short blocks of text
- Provide any relevant, specific information for the audience to easily accomplish your request (account number, specific grade, etc.)

Conclusion Paragraph

- Be specific about what you want the audience to do after reading this e-mail
- Provide contact information if necessary (be sure use a professional e-mail address)
- Use polite language and thank the audience

Sign-Off

- Use a separate line to sign your e-mail
- Professional sign-offs include “Best,” “Sincerely,” “Thanks,”