Professional Email
Etiquette for Today and Tomorrow

Nothing personal, but ...
- Email belongs to the organization – just as computers, phones, and copy machines do.
- Nothing you send to, from, or at work using the workplace email program belongs to you.

Professional Etiquette
- Professional email, unlike the casual message you might send a friend, should look professional:
  - polite
  - considerate
  - responsible
  - forward-looking

WARNING!
- The ease of the technology itself means that we often treat email as something temporary and unimportant.
- But workplace email is not a casual tool:
  - When sent outside the workplace, email functions much like the business letter.
  - When sent inside the workplace, it functions like a memo.

WARNING!
- Email, like the letter or memo, will be:
  - filed (intentionally or unintentionally)
  - referred to by the recipient, sender, or a third party sometime in the future

WARNING!
- Most important, in legal proceedings email is discoverable.
  - The most seemingly innocuous message can make you and the organization liable for damages.
**WARNING!**

- Most important, in legal proceedings email is **discoverable**.
- Hitting the delete key does **not** permanently delete messages, sent or received!

**Email Liability**

- One law firm settled for a *six-figure* payout when a disgruntled client sued for malpractice and through routine discovery read the email correspondence from one attorney to another.

  When are those scumbags going to pay us?

**Email Liability**

- Many a working relationship has soured when an employee was forwarded a derogatory email he or she was never meant to see.
- Just ask Bryant Gumbel!

**Two Email Fundamentals**

- Email etiquette requires users to **never forward** personal messages.
- Email reality dictates that any message you send **will be forwarded**.

  Like that FBI agent said, Trust No One.

**Spamming**

- *spam* v. 1. to inundate with superfluous garbage; 2. to serve tasteless, bland pink blobs and call it meat; 3. to foist your views on those who have absolutely no interest.

  - Define your **to** and **cc** groups carefully.
  - Don’t routinely send an email to **everyone** in the company, department, team, or organization.

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  - Otherwise, recipients tired of your wasting their time will develop their own routine: **deleting your messages without reading them**.
**The Reply**

- **Reply, Reply to All, Forward**
- **Were you directly addressed or just cc’d?**
  - A reply may not be required from you.
- **Is a reply requested?**
- **Or is the message simply informational?**
  - A reply may not be required from you.

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**The Reply**

- **Reply only to those who need a reply from you.**
  - Usually, reply only to the individual who sent you the message.

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**The Reply**

- **Use Reply to All sparingly.**
  - When appropriate, Reply to All ensures that other team members or departmental coworkers stay in the loop.
  - But be sure you’re not replying to the 712 people the sender emailed!

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**The Reply**

- **If you receive **misdirected** mail, let the sender know what happened.**
- **Do not** forward email without permission from the sender.
  - But of course, **assume that others do!**

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**The Message**

- **Email has two purposes:**
  - to **document**
  - to **communicate**

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**The Message**

- **If your purpose is **documentation**, be as clear as possible.**
- **Consider your readers:**
  - your intended recipient(s)
  - the file
  - users months or years from now
  - the unintentional recipient (due to forwarding or discovery)
The Message

◆ If your purpose is **communication**, craft a message that will get the readers’ attention within the few lines of text that appear in **Auto-preview**.
  
  ■ For security, **disable** the Preview Pane!

The Subject Line

◆ This may be the only part of your email the recipient sees!
  
  ■ **Be descriptive**.
  
  ■ Do not type on the subject line beyond the visible screen.

The Subject Line

◆ **Avoid** “important” or “urgent.”
  
  ■ Readers usually ignore such overused signals.
  
  ■ Instead, provide enough description that the reader understands the **urgency** of your message.

The Message

◆ Readers will not work to understand an unclear meaning. **Cut to the chase!**

Cut to the chase! ☹️

The recipient fell asleep while trying to find the point in this unproofed, rambling message.

Cut to the chase! ☹️

Here, the recipient knows exactly what the sender wants!
Cut to the chase!

- Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Bullet items to break up long passages.
- Avoid long passages.
- Be professional!
  - Use standard grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Netiquette Rule No. 28

- Professional correspondence lags behind acceptable-use trends.
- So be conservative when it comes to netspeak abbreviations and emoticons.

Let’s do the 1st b/c I’ve got plans on 2d, lol. :-)

Netiquette Rule No. 28

- Managers and supervisors have compared an excess use of emoticons and netspeak to the tendency of teens to dot their “i’s” with circles and daisy petals.
  - And point out that they tend not to take such messages — or their senders — seriously.

Let’s do the 1st b/c I’ve got plans on 2d, lol. :-)

Netiquette Rule No. 1

- Avoid writing in all capital letters.
  - It reads as ANGRY SHOUTING!
  - And it’s hard to read.

The Message

- Beware of the tone of your message.
  - Short, curt responses may unintentionally communicate anger.
  - Sarcasm is an expression of anger — and often comes across hotter than it would in person, where the face and voice assist understanding.

Avoid writing in all lowercase letters.
- Unless you’re e.e. cummings or k.d. lang!
**Beware the emotional reply!**

- The marvel and the danger of email is its ease of use.
- Too often we type our reply in anger (or when we're having a really bad day), then hit **send** before we take time to think.

**Beware the emotional reply!**

- First, type your response. But **don't** hit **send**! **Positive Karma!**
- Second, **walk away**. Take a moment before you return to your desk, and then proof the reply before sending it.

**Netiquette Rule No. 47**

- Sometimes email gets in the way of good communication.
- **Know when to go low-tech!**