

Email is probably the most frequently used method of communication within the business world. Some people talk of getting 100s of emails per day! It is not always possible to deal effectively with this deluge of data!

Our tips will help you get the basics right and keep email as an effective method of communication.

- **Be clear with emails, use the spell check and always re-read before sending to make sure the meaning is unambiguous.** The email medium is just one of the ways your message and style come across so it is important to be particular about your perceived image.
- **Sloppy spelling and missing words** can undermine your perceived image.
- **Meanings and nuances in emails can be lost in translation**, so try not to be ironic or funny unless the recipient knows you very well. It is best to put yourself in the recipient's position – can the wording be clearer?
- **If you are going to send a large attachment (anything over 100kb) ask the recipient first.** This is courteous and you may find that they may need to free up disk space first or they may suggest an alternative approach.
- **In character, email is somewhere between an informal telephone call and a formal letter** but an email can be easily kept as a permanent record – a phone call is more difficult. Avoid slang, careless writing, thoughtless comments, too many dots or exclamation marks.
- **Talk to your boss** about the types of information he or she needs to be copied in on.
- **Re read the message before sending**, putting yourself in the shoes of the recipient. What is the tone like? What unintended messages could the recipient see in your email? Are you being succinct enough?
- **Always use a virus checker before sending.** If you haven't already got a virus checker you can download a free version by typing "Free Virus Checker" into a search engine. Choose one that offers a regular update service.
- **If possible, send a link to a file stored on a website or shared folder, rather than as an attachment.** This is an elegant solution and you can use this opportunity to explain that this may simplify things for them.

- **If you must send an attachment then compress it (i.e. use a ZIP folder).** This reduces the hassle for them by keeping all the material in an easily saved folder.
- If you haven't already got a programme that will zip files you can download a free version by typing "Free Zip Software" into a search engine.
- **Make sure that you fill in the subject field with something meaningful when sending an email.** It will help others to file your message and find it in the future.
- **If you are going to communicate about two different topics then send 2 separate emails with the different topics in the Subject field.** This makes it easier for the recipient to file them appropriately and find them at a later date.
- **If you classify all your emails as urgent** people may gradually stop treating them as such.
- **Be careful about copying the message to the recipient's manager.** Some people may view this as untrusting and underhand
- **Remember email trails when forwarding messages.** Make sure they don't contain anything confidential.
- **If you are sending a message to lots of people, it is useful to use the bcc (Blind Copy) field, rather than publicise others' email addresses without permission.** This retains some confidentiality and guards against publicising your message for "political purposes"!
- **Use a logical folder structure for saving emails.** If you remove an attachment, remember that you could lose hidden data that would be useful if you needed to use the document again.
- **Try not to reply in haste to any emails.** If you receive an email that angers you, remember to take your time and understand the real meaning of the email, then calmly compose a response. A phone call to seek clarification can be FAR more effective for a professional response than a rapid email!
- **Deal with email at set times of the day only.** If your organisation does not have any guidelines as to how frequently you should access your inbox, then two or three times per day is a good guide. Beware of the tendency to open email as soon as it arrives – if it was that urgent to reply, perhaps the sender should have picked up the phone.

- **Turn off the automatic 'incoming email alert' facility.**
- **Remember that other forms of communication work just as well.** Try phoning your colleagues or business associates, or take the trouble to walk across the office and talk to them, rather than using email all the time. Here are some useful guidelines ...
 - “If you can see them, talk to them”,
 - “If they are in the same building, walk to them, and then talk to them”
 - “If neither applies, why not give them a ring?”
- **BEWARE OF USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.** This is perceived as shouting.
- **Use emoticons (smileys) when trying to convey a tone of voice :-)** Use them sparingly though.
- **Limit line length to 65-70 characters across.** Otherwise some email programs will wrap the text at wrong points or not wrap it at all.
- **Turn off email formatting (non-ASCII) when posting to a discussion group.**
- **When sending a web site address, always type it in the form of "http://..."** because some email programs will permit the user to click on a web address to go right there. Without the "http://" prefix these programs may not recognize it as such.
- **Don't overuse acronyms like BTW (by the way) or IMHO (in my humble opinion).** Not everyone is experienced with this jargon and they may not want to admit their confusion - possibly losing your point.
- **Assume that mail on the Internet is not secure.** Unless you are using an encryption device (hardware or software), never put in an email message anything you would not put on a postcard.
- **Make sure you click on "Reply" rather than "Reply All".** A lot of people have been very embarrassed when they made this easy to make mistake.
- **Remember that date formats, measurements, and idioms may not travel well.** Remember that email makes it easy to communicate across the world. Your recipient's culture, language, and humour may have different points of reference from your own. Be especially careful with sarcasm.

- **If your email software provides the facility, store your signatures** so they can be inserted with just a click on the mouse.
- **Remember, the cost of delivering an email message is, on average, paid about equally by the sender and the recipient (or their organisations).** This is unlike other media such as physical mail, telephone, TV, or radio. Sending someone mail may also cost them in other specific ways like network bandwidth, disk space or CPU usage. This is a fundamental economic reason why unsolicited e-mail advertising is unwelcome (and is forbidden in many contexts).
- **If you are out of the office for a few days** check to see if an automated 'out of office reply' can be set up, giving an alternative person's name who may be able to help.
- **If you are out of the office for a few days** check to see if you can set up an email divert to a colleague who can look after your emails. You can reciprocate by looking after his or her emails when he or she is out of the office.
- **Back up your emails regularly.** E.g. if you are using Microsoft Outlook the file that contains all your emails is "outlook.pst". This is usually found in C:/Documents and Settings/Your Name/Application Data/Microsoft/Outlook/. Copy and paste the file to an external device. Keep this device in a different location – preferably a different building!
- **Using 2 computers.** If you have a desktop and laptop computer transferring "outlook.pst" between computers will transfer all your Outlook data from one computer to the other. Be careful, though, when you do this. Only work on one computer at a time and then copy the "outlook.pst" file to the other computer otherwise you may lose new data.
- The more emails you send out, the more you will receive. If you want to change the way people communicate with you, make some changes yourself first.

These tips were written by [Ian Clarke and Steve Westall](#). There's more help on effective communication is [A Useful Guide to Managing People](#).

More tips and tools at 247freetips.com