

Email Etiquette (netiquette)

(Adapted from http://hobbit.ict.griffith.edu.au/~davidt/email_etiquette.htm)

While academic staff (and people generally) don't deliberately penalise students who inflict poor email manners on them, it's a good idea not to irritate or offend the recipient unless you deliberately intend to do just that.

There are no 'official' rules governing electronic communication, but as a general rule, netiquette involves the same principles as plain old etiquette - basic courtesy, respect and ethics.

By following the principles outlined below, the recipient of your email will be more likely to read and act, if not be favourably impressed by your message:

1. **Subject line to summarise the message.** Make the Subject line summarise the body of the e-mail. Ask yourself, 'will the recipient(s) know what this e-mail is about'.

For example, Instead of Subject: Exam, say Subject: Location of 1508INT Exam, 23 July 09.

2. **Don't assume the recipient knows the background.** Include enough contextual information at the beginning of the e-mail for the recipient to know what the matter is about. If in doubt, put background information in.

For example, don't say can I have an extension for my assignment?, instead say: I refer to the CIT3622 assignment 1 that I handed in late. I was ill and have a doctor's certificate. May I ask for an extension on the basis that I was too ill to do it on time?

3. **Keep it concise.** Keep messages brief and to the point. Include enough so that it is clear and makes sense, but no more.
4. **Reply within 24 hours.** Get in the habit of replying immediately - it is the polite thing to do, and the recipient will appreciate a prompt reply. It also makes you look efficient.
5. **Use the Bcc field when sending bulk email.** If you're sending email to a whole list of people, put their email addresses in the Bcc field. That way, the privacy of the recipient is respected, and spammers cannot harvest the email addresses for their own purposes.
6. **Don't shout at people or threaten them.** Don't use all capital letters, (UPPERCASE), or **oversized fonts**. The reader will likely feel they are being shouted at, or even threatened. Large sized fonts (greater than 12) are useful for people with visual impairment, but are not appropriate for general use.
7. **Avoid angry outbursts.** Don't send or reply to email when you are angry. Wait until you have calmed down and then compose the email. Once written and sent, it can't be recalled. As a guide, ask yourself, 'would I say this to the person's face?'

8. **Correct punctuation and grammar.** Use punctuation in a normal manner. One exclamation point is just as effective as five!!!! Use correct grammar as with any written message.
9. **Layout message for readability.** Use spaces and breaks between paragraphs and long sentences to make it easier on the reader.
10. **Keep the thread.** When replying to an e-mail, use the Reply option. This will keep the message in the "thread", and make it easier for the recipient to follow.
11. **Spelling.** Check your spelling! If you don't know how to spell something, look it up.
12. **Don't Reply to All unless necessary.** Think twice about sending a reply to everyone. Perhaps only selected people need to see this email. Sending it to everyone may simply be contributing to an already cluttered In-Tray.
13. **Acronyms, abbreviations, and emoticons** are OK within reason. As long as you don't overdo it, and the recipients can reasonably be expected to know what they mean, acronyms and abbreviations are OK to use in e-mail. Emoticons (for example ;-) a winking smiley face) are good when used in context. As a general rule, you probably shouldn't use them when talking to someone in authority unless you're sure.
14. **Forgetting attachments.** If the reason for sending an email is to send a file, remember to include it. It's easy to forget. One strategy is to attach the file before writing the email.
15. **Sharing large files.** Avoid sending file attachments larger than one megabyte unless it is directly necessary (like large work-related documents, spreadsheets and/or presentations).
16. **Not Suitable For Work (NSFW) warning.** Some workplaces are tolerant of non-work related email, though not too many these days. Especially if the email you are sending contains 'adult' material be sure to include the NSFW warning in the subject line. Not doing this might get someone into trouble with their boss.
17. **Chain Letters.** Don't send them.
18. **Don't be over-familiar with the recipient.** As a rule, use the title or form of address that you would use in verbal communication.
19. **Illegal Activities.** These include libel (defamatory statements), discrimination (racial, sexual, religious, ageist etc.), some adult material (child or violent erotica), illegal information (how to kill or injure people, incitement to violence, racial hatred etc.). People found engaging in illegal activities involving email are likely to have strong sanctions brought against them by the university and by the civil authorities.
20. **Email is not confidential.** It is very easy for the contents of your email to be read by others without your knowledge. So it's wise to avoid saying anything you wouldn't write on the back of a postcard. '
21. **Correct priority.** Only mark an email 'high priority' when it really is.