Professional Email Etiquette

Using proper email etiquette allows you to communicate clearly and efficiently; make a good impression on your employers, business partners, and clients; and be more successful. Below are some best practices for email etiquette.

Use Standard Formatting

Use standard fonts such as Times New Roman or Arial, standard sizes (around size 12) and colors (black). Avoid putting a lot in bold or italics. Avoid all caps. Don't use emojis.

Clear Subject Line

Make your subject line clear and brief so that the recipient knows what the message is about. This makes it more likely that they will open the email.

Use a Professional Email Address, Greeting, and Sign-off

Use a company email, or, if using a personal email address, make sure it doesn't contain anything inappropriate. Use a greeting and sign-off that is appropriate for your relationship with the person.

Use the Correct Format

Business emails should follow a simple format: subject line; greeting; body; sign-off. The body should be in short, organized paragraphs that make the message easy to understand.
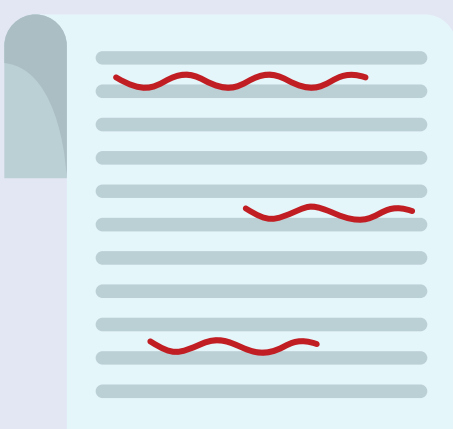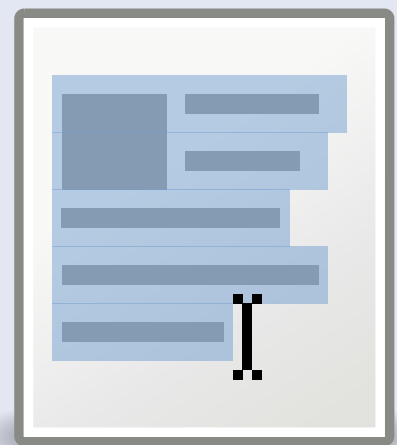
Proofread

Always double check spelling and grammar, as not doing so makes you look unprofessional and lazy. Autocorrect may also change words and names, so be on the lookout for this.
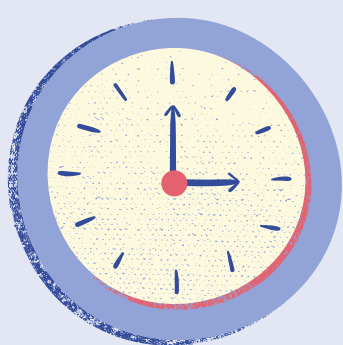
Reply Within 24 Hours

It is common courtesy to reply to someone within 24 hours. If you pass this timeframe, apologize for the delay. Also be sure to reply to all of your emails, even if briefly, so the senders know you received their message. Be cautious about using "Reply All," as this may inundate people with emails they don't need.

Use Professional Tone

Think carefully about your word choice and how they may be interpreted by others. Avoid negativity and sarcasm. Avoid anything that makes you sound overly emotional. Avoid inappropriate humor. Be respectful of cultural differences.
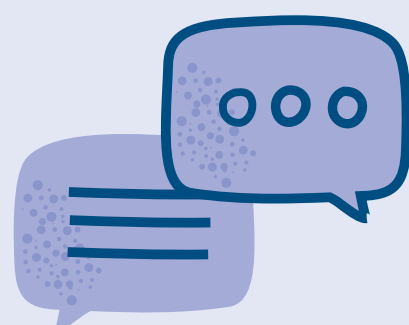
Be Cautious When Forwarding

Use caution when forwarding, as some emails may contain sensitive information. You may want to ask permission from the original sender before forwarding. When forwarding, it is best to quickly summarize what you need from the recipient so they understand it quickly.

Email Signatures

Email signatures are boxes at the bottom of your email which contain your contact info. They should include your name, job title, company website, and phone number. This makes your email look more professional.
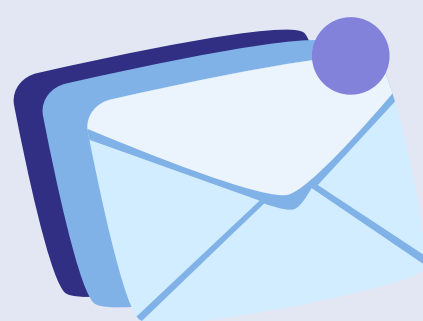
Out-of-Office Replies

If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, set an out-of-office reply to let people know you cannot respond to their email until a certain date. Include a contact person for urgent matters.

Source: Herrity, Jennifer. "28 Best Practices for Email Etiquette in the Workplace." *Indeed*, 29 June 2023. https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/email-etiquette