



## Commonsense Email Tips

It seems like everyone is crunched trying to handle their email overload. Emails are critical to the success of virtually every job and organization. Your content, how you say it, how your message looks and your response time can leave a lasting positive or negative impression. Being clear and concise can help save you time and help prevent unnecessary emailing back and forth when a message is vague or confusing. Spending a little more time at the front end in composing your emails can help make them more concise, accurate, factual and complete.

At a minimum, agencies should establish ground rules that corporate emails should be neatly typed, are grammatically correct, and are without spelling errors or typos. Use spell & grammar check, but don't rely on it as not every mistake will be picked up. Prompt and professional emails will boost the image of you and your company whereas an overly long delay in responding and/or a poorly written email can signal that you (and your company) are disorganized, unprofessional and not interested in the sender or their business. The sender may also be left questioning whether or not the email was received, if the recipient was out of the office, or worse—just ignoring them. Therefore it is essential that your agency has expectations, standards and guidelines for effective business writing and provides training if necessary.

Here are some tips to help improve your emails:

- 1. Use a subject line and change it according to the content of your email.**  
*Making the subject line more specific will help the reader and help you when searching for a particular email. It will also make you look more professional and conscientious.*
- 2. Be concise, clear and brief.**  
*Use bullet points and/or short paragraphs with lots of white space. One long paragraph may make your readers' eyes glaze over.*
- 3. If you ask questions that require a response, list each one separately.**  
*Don't imbed questions in a paragraph where they may get lost.*
- 4. Proofread your emails.**  
*Check your grammar and punctuation! If your sentences don't make sense, then you need to re-write your email.*
- 5. Avoid misspelling words.**  
*Use spell check, but don't expect it to catch every mistake. Review your email before sending.*
- 6. Know your audience.**  
*Don't try to be too chummy in your business communications. Err on the side of formal rather than informal.*
- 7. When sending an email set specific, clear and reasonable expectations.**  
*From time to time we all ask for responses ASAP, but we should try to avoid overusing "ASAP" unless the request is truly urgent. If 24 hours or the end of the week is more accurate, give those parameters or others that are specific and realistic.*





**8. Don't rush to hit send if you have a particularly lengthy, complex or sensitive topic.**

*The same goes for if you are angry or upset. Let your email sit for at least an hour or overnight and then re-read it. Having a trusted colleague review it may also prove helpful.*

**9. Don't assume privacy.**

*Just because you send your email to selected recipients doesn't mean that it won't be forwarded elsewhere—intentionally or accidentally. If you don't want your email read by others it may be best to change what you write or give the message in person or by phone. Remember that backup copies are stored on servers where they can be retrieved.*

**10. Respond promptly.**

*Emails are becoming like a conversation—responses are expected quickly, sometimes instantly! Usually 1-2 hours or 24 hours max, is acceptable. If it is going to take longer, then consider sending an acknowledgement and give an idea as to when a more complete response will be sent.*

**11. Avoid sounding like a “canned” form letter.**

*Without becoming too casual or overly personal, it is possible to be both cheerful and respectful and effectively get your message across in your emails.*

**12. Watch your tone in your email.**

*It can easily be misinterpreted. For example, using all caps—“PLEASE RESPOND IMMEDIATELY” looks like yelling. Instead, “Please respond immediately”, will generally achieve a better response.*

**13. Use appropriate greetings & closings in your emails.**

*Although it is not a formal letter, it is respectful and customary to begin and end your email this way. Make sure you spell the recipient's name and business correctly.*

**14. Be careful using business email address for personal use.**

*It is not private and may be against the policy of your company.*

