

1. Write a meaningful subject line.

Before you hit “send,” take a moment to write a subject line that accurately describes the content, giving your reader a concrete reason to open your message.

A clear subject line will help a busy professional to decide that your email is worthwhile.



Subject: [Blank]

A blank subject line suggests that your name in the “From” line is all your recipient should need in order to make you message a top priority. That could come across as arrogant, or at the very least, thoughtless. A well-chosen subject line is an important opportunity to inform and persuade your reader.



Subject: “**Important! Read Immediately!!**”

Rather than arrogantly writing that the secret contents of your mystery message are, difficult to guess why, important...



Subject: “**All Cars in the Lower Car Park Will Be Towed in 1 Hour.**”

...write a functional subject line that actually shows the important idea.



Subject: “**Quick question.**”

If the question is quick, why not just ask it in the subject line? This subject line is hardly useful.



Subject: “**Follow-up about Friday**”

A little better — provided that the recipient remembers why a follow-up was necessary.



Subject: “**That file you requested.**”

The more specific you are, the more likely your recipient’s spam-blocker will let your message through.



Subject: “**10 confirmed for Friday... will we need a larger room?**”

Upon reading this revised, informative subject line, the recipient immediately starts thinking about the size of the room, not about whether it will be worth it to open the email.



2. Keep the message focused.


- **Purpose**
- **Directness:** "Greetings," "Good Morning/Afternoon" or "Good Day" followed by the name of your recipient are acceptable email openers. Don't worry about what time your recipient will read the email. "Dear" is the one of the most appropriate salutations you can use. Personalize by using the recipient's most honorable title, such as Ms., Dr., Professor, Min., etc. "Hi" works well when writing to people with whom you're very

familiar. It's a poor form to use generic salutations like "Dear Sir/Madam" or "To Whom It May Concern."

Some unique yet professional email closings include "With anticipation," "Kind thoughts," "All the best," "Write soon," "With many thanks," "Best wishes," "Best regards", "Stay tuned," and "Respectfully yours." When we start an email with "Dear+name" we can close it with "Yours sincerely". However, when we use a generic salutation like "Dear Sirs", we close an email with "Yours faithfully".

- **Organization:** Message can't be too complex message. Number your points in more complex message. (Start with a clear statement of how many parts there are to your message.)
- **Politeness:** Please and thank-you are still important, but wordiness wastes your reader's time (which is rude).

	Indirect and wasteful: "Dearest Arnold: I would be very much obliged if, at your earliest convenience, you could send me the current password for the website. I look forward to your response. Have a nice day! Yours Truly, Philomena."
	Rudeness: "Need the password for the website."

	Urgent, yet polite: "Site is down, but I can't troubleshoot without the new password. Do you know it?"
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To help your reader focus on your message: **keep your text readable.**

- Proofread, *especially* when your message asks your recipient to do work for you. .
- Write **short paragraphs**, separated by blank lines. Most people find unbroken blocks of text boring, or even intimidating. Take the time to format your message for the ease of your reader.
- **Avoid fancy typefaces.** Don't depend upon bold font or large size to add nuances. Your recipient's email reader may not have all the features that yours does.

3. Avoid attachments.

Rather than forcing you reader to download an attachment and open it in a separate program, you will probably get faster results if you just copy-paste the most important part of the document into the body of your message.

Attachments

- consume bandwidth (do you want your recipient to ignore your request so as to avoid paying for a mobile download?)
- can carry viruses
- don't always translate correctly for people who read their email on portable devices.
- may require your recipient to have certain software installed (such as Microsoft Publisher or Apple's Pages)

4. Identify yourself clearly.

If you telephoned someone outside your closest circle, someone who probably wouldn't recognize your voice, you would probably say something like "Hello, Ms. Wordsworth, this is Sally Griffin." A formal "Dear Ms. Wordsworth" salutation is not necessary for routine workplace communication.

While formal phrases such as "Dear Professor Sneedlewood" and "Sincerely Yours," are unnecessary in email, when contacting someone outside your own organization, you should write a signature line that includes your full name and at least a link to a blog or online profile page (something that does not require your recipient to log in first).

5. Be kind. Don't flame.

Think before you click "Send."

If you find yourself writing in anger, save a draft, go get a cup of coffee, and imagine that tomorrow morning someone has taped your email outside your door. Would your associates and friends be shocked by your language or attitude?

6. Proofread.

If you are asking someone else to do work for you, take the time to **make your message look professional**.

While your spell checker won't catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos (spelling mistakes). If you are sending a message that will be read by someone like a superior or professor, or if you're about to mass-mail dozens or thousands of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit "send". Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

7. Don't assume privacy.

A good motto: **praise in public, and criticize in private**. Don't send anything over email that you wouldn't want posted.

8. Distinguish between formal and informal situations.

When you are writing to a friend or a close colleague, it is OK to use "smilies" :-), abbreviations (IIRC for "if I recall correctly", LOL for "laughing out loud," etc.) and nonstandard punctuation and spelling (like that found in instant messaging or chat rooms).

But, don't use informal language when your reader expects a more formal approach.

9. Respond promptly (quickly).

If you want to appear professional, be available to your online correspondents. Even if your reply is, "Sorry, I'm too busy to help you now," at least your correspondent won't be waiting in vain for your reply.

10. Show Respect

Don't hit "reply all" instead of "reply."

While most people know that email is not private, it is a good form to ask the sender before forwarding a personal message. If someone emails you a request, it is perfectly acceptable to

forward the request to a person who can help — but forwarding a message in order to ridicule the sender is tacky (of bad quality).

Use BCC instead of CC when sending sensitive information to large groups. The name of everyone in the CC (carbon/courtesy copy) list goes out with the message, but the names of people on the BCC list (blind carbon copy) are hidden. Put your own name in the “To” box if your mail editor doesn’t like the blank space.

Sometimes Email is Too Fast!

A colleague once asked me for help, and then almost immediately sent a follow-up informing me she had solved the problem on her own.

If I hadn’t responded so quickly to the first message, I would have saved myself the time I spent writing a long answer to an obsolete (old) question.

Source: <https://jerz.setonhill.edu/writing/e-text/email/#subject>