

# 12 Rules of Email Etiquette for Teachers



A teacher needs to follow certain rules of email etiquette for the following reasons:

- **Professionalism:** By using proper email language you will convey a professional image.
- **Confidentiality:** When following protocol guidelines, teachers are able to refrain from divulging personal student data
- **Efficiency:** Emails that are to the point are much more effective than poorly worded emails.

Here are some rules of email etiquette:

## 1. Check your email at least twice per day.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has brought about many changes in how we communicate. Email is the most common form of communication in today's workplace. Check and respond to emails at least twice per day so that you know what is going on in your workplace.

## 2. Be concise and to the point.

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read. With more users checking email on their mobile phones, an email that's too long will likely never get read—it will just get ignored.

**Instead, try:** Limiting email length to five brief sentences, max. When more detail is necessary, use attachments.

## 3. Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.

An email reply must answer all questions, while pre-empting further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further emails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and the other person's time but also cause considerable frustration. Moreover, if you are able to pre-empt relevant questions, people will be grateful and impressed with your efficient and thoughtful responses.

#### **4. Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.**

This is important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation gives a bad impression. It is also important to conveying a message properly. Emails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.

#### **5. Use appropriate spacing and emphasis**

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and layout is very important. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview. Remember that if you use the editing features available in your email program they might not show up in all of your recipients' programs so don't rely on colors, bold, italics, etc. for emphasis.

#### **6. Do not overuse the high priority option.**

The high priority option will lose its function when you really need it if it is over-used. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message could come across as aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'. Use this sparingly.

#### **7. Do not use CAPITALS for an entire email.**

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. At the very most, capitals can be used to emphasize one word, but more than that is inappropriate.

#### **8. Don't leave out the message thread.**

When you reply to an email, you should include the original mail in your reply, in other words **click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'**. Your email program probably also has an option of including the original message (if needed, you might ask your local tech support to set this for you). Using this option makes things much easier for the reader, especially if you include a new recipient (CC) on a reply. The recipient(s) will be able to follow the discussion much more efficiently.

#### **9. Read the email before you send it.**

A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings. Before pressing send, think about how the message will "feel" for your recipient – it is never recommended to make jokes or use sarcasm. It's very easy for email messages to be misinterpreted because of incorrect tone.

#### **10. Do not use CC if sending to a mailing list.**

When sending an email to a large number of people, some people place all the email addresses in the To: field. There are two drawbacks to this practice:

- (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to a large number of recipients, and
- (2) you are sharing and publicizing someone else's email address without their permission.

One way to get round this is to place all addresses in the Bcc: field.

### **11. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.**

In formal emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meaning of the abbreviations and these are generally not appropriate in formal communication. The same goes for emoticons, such as the 'smiley'. If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

### **12. Using vague, unclear subject lines.**

Generic subject lines like "Hey" or "Meeting" or "Question" require recipients to open the email to see what it's about and makes it harder to search for relevant emails later on.

**Instead, try:** Using specific, detailed subject lines to speed comprehension and save time, such as **Friday's Graduation Meeting** or **Location Change of upcoming Faculty Meeting**.