

Ten Tips to Proper E-mail Etiquette

How many e-mail messages do you send each day? 10? 50? 100? E-mail has taken over as a preferred means of both business and personal communications. With e-mail now such a dominant means of communication, it's important to maintain proper e-mail etiquette as what is written will most certainly reflect on yourself and/or your company.

1. Discretion is the greater part of replying.

Imagine that you've received a piece of company-wide e-mail from someone in your very large organization. If you feel the need to respond to the sender, rest assured that every member of your very large organization does not want to have to read your reply, especially with inboxes full of more pressing e-mail to read. This goes the same for personal e-mail (especially if it's an Internet joke or rumor). For example, your company president probably doesn't need to know if you're bringing a green bean casserole to your department's pot luck lunch. He or she probably has other types of e-mail that are more pressing that warrant his or her attention.

2. Stop YELLING.

USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS IS NOT ONLY RUDE AND IRRITATING; IT'S ALSO HARD TO READ. Save your caps for special occasions, such as those times when you want your recipient to know you're shouting. GOT IT?

3. Save the stationary for U.S. Post Office deliveries.

I know it's important to you that everyone knows you're creative, artsy, and colorful, but we're at work here. No one wants to have to hippity-hop through your "bunnies 'n love" stationery just to figure out what your message is. You may ignore this tip, however, when e-mailing personal messages from your personal e-mail account.

4. E-mail is not a chain letter.

If I send you a nice note and then get a response from you that, at first glance, appears to have only what I wrote to you at the top of it, I'm going to assume you have nothing to say to me (and sent me an empty e-mail message to tell me as much). Add your comments at the **top** of the mail, not the bottom. That way your reply won't get missed and the recipient won't get frustrated when constantly scrolling down to view your reply.

5. Only forward when appropriate.

Speaking of chain letters, if you're like most (and I know you are), you are fed up with receiving the same jokes, Internet rumors, and chain letters promising free cases of champagne, \$1000 from Bill Gates, and miracle cream that erases all your fine lines and bad memories. While you can cut some slack for those in your life who have just discovered that Great Oracle of Misinformation we call the Internet, it's just not appropriate, considerate, professional, or even cool to forward these useless things to coworkers. Reserve your e-mail forwards to messages with useful content or risk being nicknamed the resident spammer.

6. Don't be a cyber-coward.

If you have something to say that is highly personal, scary, sad, angry, tragic, vicious, shocking, etc. ... please do it in person. E-mail frequently doesn't translate emotion well and can actually make communications that generate emotional responses worse, not better.

7. Watch the size of your attachments.

There are many reasons to avoid sending large attachments. The two most important reasons are that they take a long time to download (especially on a slow or dial-up connection) and e-mail servers don't like them. E-mail servers only have a finite amount of space. If possible, compress attachments or send them by another means to lower the file size. Due to space restrictions and ever-growing attachment file sizes, many companies have imposed limits on the size of e-mails that may prevent your large message from even reaching the intended recipient.

8. Always include a subject line.

Subject lines are intended to give a hint as to what the content of an e-mail is about. Without it, your message can be easily skipped over, or worse, filtered as spam. It's not uncommon for anti-spam programs to completely filter out any messages without subject lines.

9. Avoid the itchy trigger finger.

Before sending a clever and scathing message out there to the world (with virtually no chance of retrieving it), remember this: the pushing of the **Send** button lasts a moment; its effects can last a lifetime. Always take the time to review your message before you send it. One way to help avoid the accidental sending of an unfinished e-mail is to get in the habit of typing the contents of the message prior to filling in the "To:" field.

10. Always use the spell checker.

Almost every e-mail program includes some sort of spell checker that can provide help. Although the content of your message may be vitally important, it may get missed or dismissed

due to bad spelling. Not only that, but it's hard to recover from 3rd grade spelling errors when claiming your Master's degree warrants a promotion.

About Desktop Resources, Inc.

Desktop Resources, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Tony Schafer, and is a leader in helping organizations couple their business initiatives with the technology to address those needs. DRI's "InformIT" managed services offerings proactively manage client infrastructure and strive to prevent problems before they occur. For more details, contact DRI at (317) 596-3650 or <http://www.DesktopResources.com>