

# LET'S TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL E-MAIL



## DOs AND DON'Ts

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### Do!

- Respond promptly and check your e-mail at least once per day. If you don't have time for a complete response to the sender, send a short message acknowledging receipt of the sender's message and giving an estimate of how long it will take you to reply fully.
  - Use caution when forwarding a message sent to you. The original sender of a message may not want individuals other than the original recipients to read this message. If you have *any* doubts, check with the original sender.
  - Check with the recipient before sending an attachment. Will it possibly be inconvenient for the recipient to print out the attachment? If the attachment is very large, check with the recipient to make sure that his/her e-mail program can accommodate it.
  - Review and proofread your messages before sending. If you are a non-native speaker, consider having a native speaker review your messages until you are comfortable with writing e-mails in English.
  - Include an accurate subject line. Consider what key words will best communicate your subject to the recipient.
  - Be polite. Using polite words and apologies does *not* guarantee a polite tone. If you are a non-native speaker, have a native English-speaker review some of your e-mails to judge the politeness of the tone.
  - Be brief. Leave out personal details. Evaluate the relevance of other details.
  - Practice good grammar. Even though e-mail is a less formal way of communicating, continue to use good grammar and punctuation.
  - Look for cues from the other person regarding how to address him or her (first or last name, title, etc.), the appropriate level of formality, his or her available time, etc.
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### Don't!

- Be overly "conversational." Maintain a professional, not a casual, tone.
- Use a first name alone *with* a title OR a last name alone *without* a title. For example, do not say "Dear Prof. Bill," "Dear Mr. Bill," or "Dear Smith."
- Overuse capitalization. Writing an e-mail in all capital letters can be regarded as *shouting* at your recipient.
- Use unnecessary symbols and "emoticons," for example, ☺, :-), etc.
- Ask for information that you can easily obtain yourself or from a subordinate source (such as a classmate or administrative assistant).
- Use a very informal or "cute" e-mail name for academic/professional correspondence, for example, "[iluvduke@xxx.com](mailto:iluvduke@xxx.com)" or "[smart\\_guy@xxx.com](mailto:smart_guy@xxx.com)."

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**References for the above information:**

**Swales, John M. and Feak, Christine B. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. (2007.) Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.**

**Maceda, Janet. “Academic and Professional Email.” (2008.) Unpublished class materials, Duke University.**