

# 12 email writing best practice tips



## 1. Content



### **Do:**

- Keep your email short and to-the-point and focus on one clear message.
- Introduce yourself by providing a quick introduction at the start of your email, unless you have a very regular, ongoing relationship with your recipient. For example: ***“We met at the awards ceremony in Dallas last month, and I wanted to get in touch to follow up on our chat about...”***

### **Don't:**

- Forget to answer any questions.
- Complain or focus on your own issues or challenges.
- Gossip about colleagues, clients, or customers.

## 2. Detail



### **Do:**

- Refer to the attachments in the body of the email. If there are multiple attachments, provide a simple breakdown of what each one is.
- CC people who need to be part of the discussion or can offer additional insights.

### **Don't:**

- Include too many attachments. If lots of attachments are required, organize them into groups and send out in separate emails.
- Send unnecessary or large attachments. If you need to send a large file, upload it to a cloud service like Google Drive, WeTransfer, or Dropbox and provide a link.
- CC people who are not relevant to the topic in discussion. Instead of “spamming” colleagues or partners, consider forwarding the emails later if they eventually need to contribute to the discussion or brief them offline.

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## 3. Format



### **Do:**

- Use descriptive headings to break up text and accommodate screen readers.
- Consider accessibility whenever you decide to vary formatting.
- Keep font sizing and colors standard.
- Reserve underlining for hyperlinked texts.

### **Don't:**

- Introduce emojis into the conversation.
- Capitalize or embolden words unnecessarily.
- Use unusual fonts or italics. If in doubt, opt for sans-serif fonts such as Arial or Calibri.
- Paste in entire URLs. Instead, create hyperlinks or use shortened versions.

## 4. Greeting



### Do:

- Include your recipient's name, not just a greeting.
- Triple-check the spelling of the recipient's name. Don't assume you know. If in doubt, look on LinkedIn.
- Use a friendly approach unless it's your first interaction with the recipient or there's a specific reason for more formality. Depending on the scenario, choose from the following:

**CASUAL GREETINGS:** "Hi *first name*" "Hey *first name*" "Hey/Hi there *first name*" or "Good morning/afternoon, *first name*"

**FORMAL GREETINGS:** Dear *first name*,  
Dear Mr/Mrs *last name*

### Don't:

- Abbreviate the recipient's name unless they've signed off or sent a previous email using a shortened version.
- Use clichéd or overly familiar, formal, or generic phrases such as: "What's up?" "Yo," "Hey!," "To whom it may concern," "Dear sir or madam," "Hi friend," "Ladies/Gentlemen," or "All"

## 5. Language



### Do:

- Use unambiguous, common usage words and phrases.
- Adapt subtly but sensitively, where appropriate, to match the recipient's language preferences (for example, switch between English and American English as appropriate).

### Don't:

- Use slang or jargon.
- Use abbreviations without writing them out in full the first time they're used.

## 6. Length



### Do:

- Review and edit your content down.
- Use shorter sentences and words.
- Humanize content. Don't strip out words or phrases that give your email warmth and personality.

### Don't:

- Ramble or sidestep the main issue.
- Be too brief.
- Include unnecessary information.

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## 7. Sign-off



### Do:

- Keep it short and simple. Limit it to name, job title, LinkedIn URL and/or company website, and phone number
- Add an automatic signature. You can always edit or remove it if needed.
- Use your name.
- Match the tone of your sign-off to the tone of your email. For example:

IF YOUR TONE IS LIGHT AND FRIENDLY, end with a warm sign-off: ***“Thanks,” “Thanks again,” “Best,” “Cheers,” “Happy day of the week” “Enjoy the weekend,” “Speak/Talk soon,” “Talk to you time or day,” “Looking forward to working together,” “Looking forward to our next conversation,” or “Excited to hear your thoughts.”***

IF YOUR TONE IS MORE RESERVED, end with a more formal sign-off: ***“Regards,” “Thank you,” “Thank you for your time,” or “Have a wonderful day, weekend.”***

**Don't:**

- Add lengthy disclaimers or postscript messages.
- Add a “Sent from my phone” caveat.
- Omit sign-off altogether.
- Use old-fashioned, off-the-wall, overly familiar, or stiff phrases such as: “*Yours sincerely,*” “*Kind regards,*” “*Respectfully yours,*” “*Xoxo,*” or “*Cordially.*”

## 8. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar

**Do:**

Get someone else to read through your email. Run a specific check on common, but high-profile, grammatical mix-ups such as:

- There/they're/their
- Its/it's
- Effect/affect
- Your/you're
- Too/two/to
- Loose/lose
- I/me/myself

**Don't:**

- Forget punctuation. Check commas, terminal punctuation (the ending of a line or sentence), salutation punctuation (the way you end a greeting), and exclamation marks (less is more when it comes to these).
- Forget to spell check before you send.

## 9. Structure



### Do:

- Tick off all of the standard elements in every email. These include a subject line, a greeting, body content, a sign-off, and a signature.
- Separate sections using paragraphs to make your message more readable.
- Start with the most important information.
- Use bullet points or numbered lists to make detailed information more accessible.

### Don't:

- Overwhelm readers with long, unbroken blocks of text.
- Omit elements as the email conversation continues. Keep structure consistent and complete.

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## 10. Subject line



### Do:

- Keep it simple, clear, and concise by giving recipients an honest, accurate, and specific summary of what your email's about.
- Make it personal—if there's a connection, reference it. (*"Nice talking at the awards ceremony last night"* is more compelling than: *"Hey, nice to chat!"*)
- Be specific about why the recipient should open your message. (What do they need to do, and what do they have to gain?)
- Update the subject line if the email is forwarded and the original focus has shifted.

### Don't:

- Be generic or cliched.
- Use all capitals or excessive exclamation marks.



## 11. Timing



### **Do:**

- Respond to close teammates within 12 hours.
- Respond to other colleagues within 24 hours.
- Respond to external contacts within a week unless it's urgent or there's a specific deadline.
- Treat customer-facing emails more urgently.
- Set up a clear and informative out-of-office reply if you're going to be unavailable for longer than a day.

### **Don't:**

- Send emails outside work hours.
- Let an email sit unopened. If you can't respond within a reasonable time, send a holding reply.

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## 12. Tone



### **Do:**

- Choose your words carefully and think about how someone else would read them.
- Minimize adjectives.
- Imitate your recipient's tone. For example, if they're short, factual, and to-the-point, be concise in return. If they're more chatty, respond in kind.
- Pick up the phone if you're struggling to find the right words or are concerned about getting the tone of a tricky email wrong.

### **Don't:**

- Be sarcastic.
- Use humor unless your relationship warrants it.
- Cross the line by being overly familiar.
- Be negative. Avoid words and phrases such as errors, mistakes, issues, failures, delays, problems, crises, trouble, unfortunate, and consequences.

For example:

**DON'T WRITE:** *“I’ll forward your email to our Development Team, but given it’s Friday, there’s no knowing if they’ll actually read it!”*

Why? Too sarcastic, the recipient is left wondering if the sender actually cares about the problem. Or if the email will actually be actioned or ignored.

**DO WRITE:** *“I’ll forward your email to our Development Team now. They should get back to you by the end of the day.”*

Why? Clear and specific, the recipient is left feeling confident that the matter has been taken seriously and is in hand.

