



Electronic communication is constantly changing. E-mail is great for fast and effective communication, but basic rules for communication and respect should still be kept in mind. While e-mail is certainly a more informal form of communication, here are some tips for effective and courteous e-mail communication.

1. Let it simmer.

Don't send an e-mail in haste when you are upset. If you are thinking of addressing a workplace problem via e-mail, give it a few days. Allow yourself some time to calm down and think things over. You can't take back that angry e-mail.

2. Your subject line is your first impression.

Be sure to include an informative and poignant subject line. Never send an e-mail with "no subject" in the subject line.

3. Grammar and word choice matter.

While spellcheck is a great tool, always read your e-mails over once or twice for grammar, spelling and word choice. E-mail is not an excuse for misspellings, grammatical errors, or punctual mistakes.

4. Be conscious of your voice.

Be aware of usage of all caps, emoticons, and text message abbreviation. Using all capital letters tends to convey to the reader that you are shouting at them and tends to be harder to read. Also be aware that in the absence of facial expressions or tone of voice, interpretation defaults to the negative.

5. Salutations, closing, and signature blocks.

While there is no doubt that e-mail is more informal than a typed letter, salutations and closings are still important. When composing e-mail to senior management always use a more formal greeting. When in doubt, defer to the formal. For example, use Mr. or Ms., hello versus hi, or Elizabeth versus Liz. When communicating with senior management you should also end the e-mail with a formal sign-off as well.