

## Formal Emails

In both academic and professional settings, formal emailing is a requirement. Email etiquette can drastically change the recipient's perception of the sender, and thereby their subsequent interaction. Formal emailing can be applied to many situations, including a meeting request, an informational interview request, a job application, reaching out to a professor, a request for a recommendation, a request for information to complete a project, or any other academic or professional electronic correspondence.

### *Academic Emailing*

Regardless of the relationship with a superior or the superior's casual demeanor in person, you should use formal emailing when reaching out regarding the course (27). It is safest to initiate the conversation with a formal tone, although a relationship may become more casual as you get to know each other better (27).

- **Needs Improvement:** "Hey Jane" or "Hey Prof"
- **Improved:** "Dear Professor Doe"

### *Professional Emailing*

Email is frequently used to apply for jobs or collaborate with others in a professional setting. If the sender and recipient are not familiar with each other, a formal tone should be utilized to maintain a professional relationship. Again, the relationship may become more casual over time, but a formal tone should be initially adopted.

#### *Structure:*

- **Subject Line.** Use a clear, concise subject line (28). The recipient may utilize this to prioritize opening the message and may also use keywords to search for the message.
  - The person receiving your email should be able to tell what it is about from the subject line. Many of us receive hundreds of emails a day so it's important to make yours stand out. A clear subject line is what helps the person you are writing to decide to open and read your email.
- **Greeting.** Formal greetings should **always** be included (28). If the recipient is unknown, it is best to use "To Whom It May Concern." If the recipient is known, it is best to use "Dear Name." In a public health context, try to find out the preferred title of the individual (e.g. Dr., Ms.). If you cannot find the title, it is better to err on the side of giving people a higher title (i.e. Dr.) or their job title (i.e. Director, Commissioner, or Professor).
- **Body.** Maintain a friendly tone and a concise message (28). Avoid jokes and sarcasm, as these are easily misinterpreted and can appear inappropriate via email. Similarly, keep the message very concise as excessively long messages may be viewed as a waste of time (no page-long emails).
- **Agenda/Deadlines.** Be very clear with the proposed agenda or deadlines in the message. If you are requesting a meeting time, provide some days and times that may work for you.
- **Closing/Signature.** While closing the message, end with "Sincerely," "Best Regards," or simply "Thank you," followed by your name, class/school/job affiliation, and title if appropriate.

- **Attachments.** If there are attachments, be sure to address the attachment in the body of the message. For example, it is acceptable to say “Attached please find the document you requested.” Alternatively, it is also acceptable to write “Enclosed: contract, budget” after the closing of the message.

#### *Best Practices*

- Use a professional account or an academic account. The most accepted practice is to use an account with your name, such as a “john.smith@email.com.”
- Always double-check the message for spelling errors and clarity (28).
- It is best to include the relationship to the recipient. For example, include the class number if sending a message to an instructor or the job title if reaching out to another organization.
- If you are writing someone you do not know, but have been referred by a mutual contact, be sure to reference that contact early in the message. For example, you may wish to say, “Dr. Carter suggested that I reach out to you with my questions about healthcare reform.”

#### *A Note on Calendar Invites*

Calendar invites can be a useful tool when collaborating with colleagues. Many of the same rules from formal emails apply to calendar invites. For example, you should be specific in the appointment subject line, and **always** include a location. Furthermore, be cognizant of your language settings on your account. If your computer system is in another language and you send a calendar invite, the recipient’s account may mark it as spam.