

# Communicating in the Workplace

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## *Administrative Accounting and Bookkeeping Program*

### **Handout: Email Tips & Tricks**

#### **1. Be concise and to the point.**

An email should be as long as it needs to be and no longer.

#### **2. Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.**

An email reply must answer all the questions in the original message and include enough information to pre-empt further questions. Imagine, for instance, that a customer sends you an email asking which credit cards you accept. Instead of just listing the card types, you can guess that their next question will be about how they can order, so you could also include some order information and a URL to your order page.

#### **3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation..**

Improper spelling, grammar, and punctuation give a bad impression of your company. And, emails with no full stops, commas, or other punctuation are hard to read.

#### **4. Make it personal.**

Not only should the e-mail be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason, auto replies are usually not effective.

#### **5. Use templates for frequently used responses.**

Some questions are asked over and over again, such as directions to your office or how to subscribe to your newsletter. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Notepad or Word file on your Desktop or use email templates.

#### **6. Answer swiftly or send an interim reply.**

Email should be replied to within a working day. If you can't do this, send an interim reply saying that you have received it and will get back to them soon.

#### **7. Do not attach unnecessary files.**

Sending overly large attachments you can annoy customers and even bring down their e-mail system. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send them when needed. It's also a good practice to list the attachment and its file format in the body of the email.

**8. Use proper structure & layout.**

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than from paper, use a layout that makes your e-mail easier to read. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. Don't be afraid to leave lots of white space and use bulleted or numbered lists for sequential items. This may make your message take up more space, but electronic paper is cheap and it will be much easier to read.

**9. Do not overuse the high priority option.**

If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function, it will be ignored when you really mean it.

**10. Do not write in CAPITALS.**

WRITING IN ALL CAPITALS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING IN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS. This is annoying and inappropriate for business correspondence.

**11. Don't leave out the message thread.**

When you reply to an email, you should include enough of the original mail in your reply to make the context of your reply clear.

**12. Proofread the email before sending.**

It's amazing how many silly errors, omissions, or inappropriate comments this catches.

**13. Do not overuse Reply to All.**

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

**15. Mailings > use the Bcc: field or do a mail merge.**

When sending an email mailing, some people place all the email addresses in the To: field. There are two drawbacks to this practice: (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to many recipients, and (2) you are publicizing someone else's email address without their permission. One way to get round this is to place all addresses in the Bcc: field, or do a mail merge from an address list.

**16. Do not forward chain letters.**

Do not forward chain letters. Just delete them; almost all are hoaxes.

**17. Never reply to spam.**

This just confirms your email address.

**18. Do not request delivery and read receipts.**

This will almost always annoy your recipient. It also often does not work, as the recipient can block that function or his/her software might not support it. If you want to know whether an email was received, just ask the recipient.

**19. Do not copy a message or attachment without permission.**

Don't copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.

**20. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.**

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you wouldn't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. And be careful of sending jokes.

**21. Don't send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.**

By forwarding someone else's message you become liable for what they said.

**22. Use the To: and cc: fields appropriately.**

Any action recipients of the email should be put into the "To:" field. The "cc" field is for recipients who should receive a copy for information, but don't need to take action.

**23. Rewrite unclear subject lines when replying.**

If the subject of the original email to you was unclear, don't be afraid to edit it in your reply, or — if you want to preserve the original — add a clarification in square brackets ("[""). For example:

**Minutes [Weekly Team Meeting, 27 Mar 2026]**

**24. When replying, use "[SNIP]" to trim excess matter from the original email.**

If the email thread contains excess text that's no longer relevant, just select it and delete it to make your reply more concise and readable. Add [SNIP] where your deletion starts to let recipients know that you've snipped material from lower down in the thread.

## Keyboard Shortcuts

Knowing the basic keyboard shortcuts can dramatically speed up your email game.

	<b>Apple Mail</b>	<b>Outlook (Mac)</b>	<b>Outlook (Windows)</b>
<b>Reply</b>	Cmd+R	Cmd+R	Ctrl+R
<b>Reply All</b>	Cmd+↑+R	Cmd+↑+R	Ctrl+↑+R
<b>Forward</b>	Cmd+↑+F	Cmd+J	Ctrl+F
<b>New Message</b>	Cmd+N	Cmd+N	Ctrl+N
<b>Send</b>	Cmd+↑+D	Cmd+Return	Ctrl+Enter
<b>Add Attachment</b>	Cmd+↑+A	Cmd+E	Ctrl+E
<b>Delete</b>	Delete	Delete	Ctrl+D

### Legend:

Cmd = Command / ⌘

Ctrl = Control

↑ = Shift