

## Email Etiquette

Email is one of the main ways to communicate with your professors, professional staff, and in the workplace. It is more formal than chat. Over time, certain rules of etiquette, or social expectations, have developed. You may be viewed negatively if you neglect to follow them. Email etiquette includes using a polite tone, representing yourself professionally, writing clearly, and being timely when sending and replying to emails.

Etiquette is especially important when communicating with professors. It is important to remember that there are differences between emailing a friend or peer and emailing your supervisor or professor.

### Why is Email Etiquette Important?

Email is the primary method of communication between students and university faculty/staff as well as between job professionals. It creates an impression of the sender, your communication skills, and abilities as a student. Also, it shows your professionalism, maturity, and investment in education. The following guidelines will help you make a good impression

### Polite Tone

- Write in a polite tone that is respectful of your instructor and their time. Consider the following examples:

**Polite:** *After* I receive my grade, I would like to request a meeting.

*["After" acknowledges that the instructor will complete grading at some point.]*

**Impolite:** *If* I receive my grade, I would like to request a meeting.

*["If" sounds impatient and implies the instructor may never finish grading.]*

- Be careful about where you assign blame, particularly when it comes to discussing grades.

**Polite:** *I* didn't receive a good grade on my last paper and, if possible, would like to discuss ways to improve.

*[accepts responsibility and asks for the possibility of discussion]*

**Impolite:** *You* gave me a poor grade on my last paper, and I want to discuss why.

*[places the blame on the instructor and sounds demanding in requesting a discussion]*

- Present requests as questions, rather than commands or demands. If scheduling a meeting, leave the request open for your instructor to suggest a specific time.

Polite: Can I meet with you during your office hours on Friday?

Also Polite: Would it be possible to meet with you sometime this week?

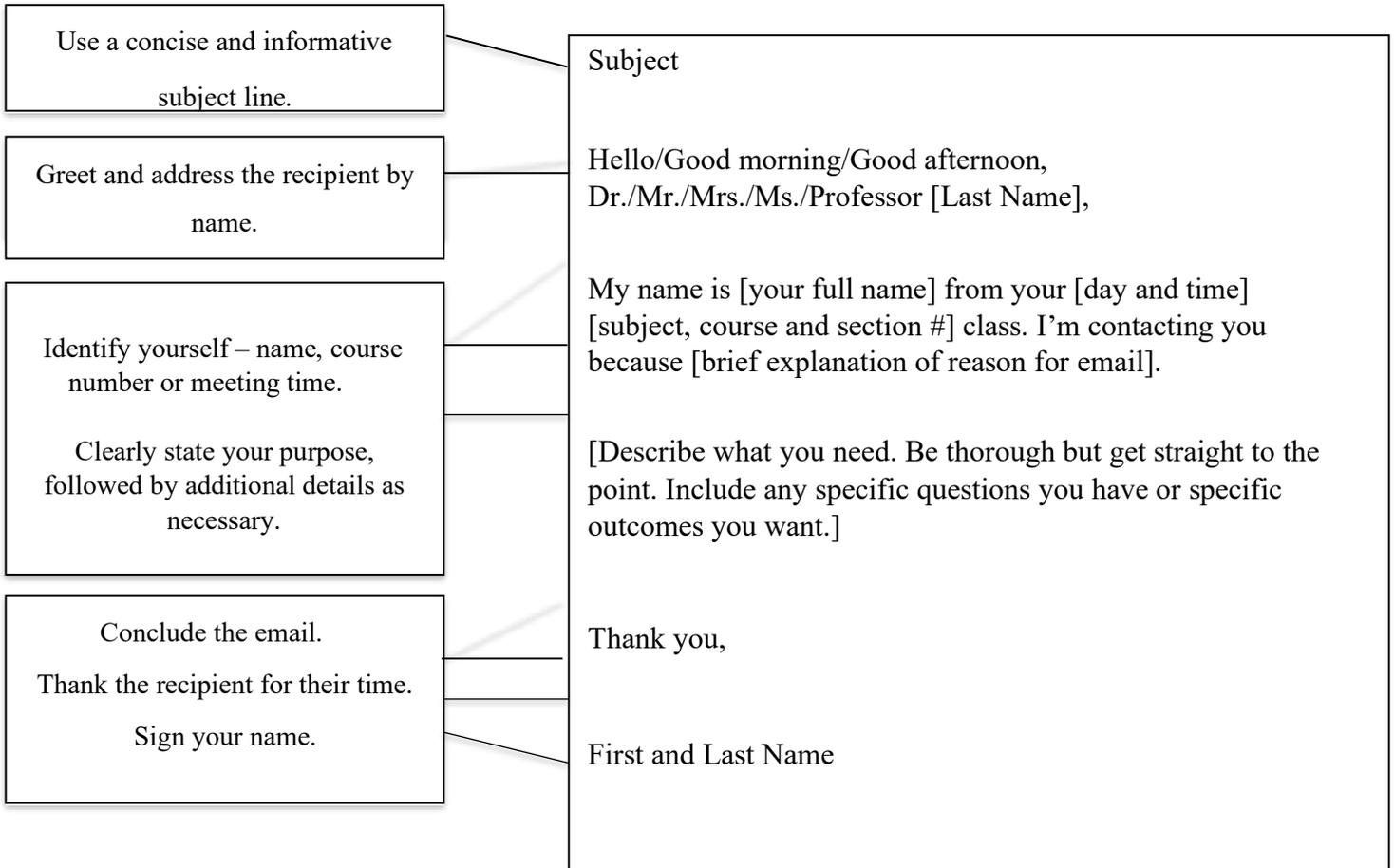
Impolite: I want a meeting in your office this Friday at 2pm.

## **Professionalism**

- Recognize when it is **appropriate** to email
  - Asking simple questions.
  - Submitting an assignment when told to do so.
  - Explaining that you will be late to class or miss class.
  - Requesting a meeting in your instructor's office.
- Recognize when **not** to email.
  - Asking questions that are already answered on the assignment sheet or syllabus.
  - Asking complicated questions that require long answers.
  - Submitting an assignment without permission.
  - Expressing anger that could lead to a heated debate or argument.
- Proofread your email before sending.
  - Re-read your subject line and entire email before sending.
  - Ensure the recipient's name is spelled correctly.
  - Check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- If you attach a document, double-check that the correct document is attached.
- Provide all necessary information, such as the course number and section or time of class, assignment name, or dates. This prevents extra emails for clarification and ensures you get the information you need in a timely manner.
- Send emails early, so you can receive a response before your deadline. By the same token, reply to emails as soon as possible as well.
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Adapted from Miami University  
& Texas A&M

## Email Template



## The Do's and Don'ts of Writing Email

Consider your audience. To whom are you writing this email?	
Focus on your purpose. What do you hope to accomplish by writing this email?	
Use a professional and identifiable email address.	Do not assume email is private. Email is not private. Do not write anything in an email that you wouldn't want shared.
Be mindful of your tone. In the absence of non-verbal cues, your message could be misinterpreted by the reader(s).	Do not expect an immediate response. Most instructors have a 24-48 hour response window.
Keep message brief and to the point. Your reader doesn't need to know everything going on in your life.	Do not respond to or write an email when you are angry or upset. Give yourself space and time to think before writing.
Write, re-read, and revise your message before sending. Use spell-check!	Do not write in ALL CAPS – your reader may perceive this as SHOUTING! Also, limit your use of exclamation points!
Follow the conventions for effective paragraph writing. Each paragraph (section) should focus on the development of one idea.	Do not email your professor to ask them what you missed in class. Check the course website, talk to a peer, and/or make an appointment to visit them during office hours.
Use complete sentences.	Do not write in textese or txt-speak. Avoid the use of emoticons.
Use the top-down method: Begin with the most important information at the top of the message, followed by additional information and explanation.	