



EMAIL *Communication* GUIDE



**EASTIN CENTER
FOR CAREER READINESS**
Spears School of Business



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION GUIDE: EMAILS

Understanding the art of sending and receiving emails is an extremely important part of the everyday communications in business-to-business settings as well as in all of our personal lives.

An errantly sent e-mail could do irreparable damage to someone's personal life and even go as far as to ruin a business career.

Always take for granted that any e-mail you may send is a permanent record that could be viewed by anyone.

Always err on the side of caution in any written communication.

Proper email communication has become a necessary skill for almost every professional career. This Guide is designed to assist you with the following areas:

- Proper email structure
- General tips and resources
- Email etiquette

EMAIL STRUCTURE

Hierarchy of Recipients

- As strange (and petty) as it may seem, the addressing of emails is always a consideration in a business communication environment.
- Even though the information is the same, a hierarchy of recipients should be considered.
- List the most important person needing the information in the “To...” position.

(That is not always the most important person receiving the email (such as the CEO) as the CEO may be just receiving the information as a “For Your Information” (FYI) function and may just be listed in the “Cc...”)

Example: the most important person needing the information in the “To...” could be the grounds keeper; the CEO may just be copied in the “Cc...” on a need to know basis.

- If there are three people of similar status (CEO – CFO – General Manager), they should be noted in some type of hierarchical sequence in the “To...” line while others needing the information can probably be randomly listed in the “Cc...”
- Even changing the “randomness” of the recipients in the “Cc...” list can result in a positive reaction, though probably never voiced:
 - Cc...Bill, Susan, Andrea
 - Cc...Susan, Andrea, Bill
 - Cc...Andrea, Bill, Susan
- This “randomness” removes gender and implied importance issues such as “why am I always listed last?” People notice.

Starting an Email

- **To...** Enter recipients' name(s) and/or address(es).
- **Cc...** Carbon Copy (Computer Copy – Courtesy Copy) = Enter the email addresses of additional people you want to know about the email.

(Remember: Everyone will see his or her names and possibly their email addresses.)

- **Bcc...** Blind Carbon Copy (Blind Computer Copy – Blind Courtesy Copy) = Enter the email addresses of the people you want to know about the email but not announce to everyone else (the recipient(s) in the To... line and the Cc... line) that these people are getting a copy.

Important Note about Bcc... *No one that receives a blind carbon copy knows who else received a blind carbon copy of the same email.* The copy you receive does not identify itself as being a blind carbon copy; you can only tell by the fact that you are not listed as the "To:" recipient nor are you listed as a "Cc..." recipient.



Legendary business blues singer
Blind Carbon Copy

Clarification: If you would send an email to your boss in the "To...", "Cc..." everyone in your department, and then "Bcc..." everyone in your company, no one in your company will know that anyone else in your company received the same email. They will all see the recipients in both the "To..." and the "Cc...".

Easy Way to Send Yourself a Copy! Sending a Blind Carbon Copy of an email to your email address is a good way to maintain an original copy. There is no indication that you sent the copy to yourself to the recipients.

- **Subject Line:** Summarize the main idea, but avoid meaningless one-word subject lines such as 'Help' or 'Meeting.' Instead, an appropriate subject line might be 'Expense Form due by Friday at 5pm' or 'Task Force Meeting Thursday, May 28th.' Type in upper case and lowercase, as you would in a title. Never use a complete sentence or leave the subject blank.

Formality of an Email

- **Informal Writing**
 - Uses first name of recipient
 - No name (for reply chain)
 - Retains some casual qualities (personal pronouns, contractions)
 - Is conversational
 - Example: “I’ve read your excellent proposal. I predict the administrators will approve it.”

- **Formal Writing:**
 - Uses “Dear” with full name of recipient or “Good morning” or “Good afternoon”
 - Maintains distance between writer and reader
 - Avoids personal references and contractions
 - Example: “The proposal is excellent. The executives are likely to approve it.”

Email Structure

- **Conciseness**
 - Begin directly for most emails
 - Use bullets when appropriate for easier viewing
 - Keep sentences and paragraphs short (many read emails on phones)
 - Use words economically

- **Clarity**
 - Practice clear writing techniques and use simple, clear language

- **Courtesy**
 - Build goodwill
 - Avoid angry emails

- **Correctness**
 - Check for grammatical and formatting errors

Closing an Email

- Informal: The writer’s name or no name for reply chain
- More formal: ‘Thanks,’ ‘Regards’
- Formal: ‘Sincerely’
- Signature Block: Name, Job title, Company name, Website Link, Phone number, Email address, LinkedIn address

EMAIL TIPS

- Try composing offline in Word or other word processing programs. Copy and paste your completed email message into the body into an opened email.
- By composing offline and saving, you can easily edit the email for additional uses.
- Read your email out-loud to catch grammatical errors and organization issues.
- Make sure your address or addresses are correct.
- Avoid misleading subject lines.
- Apply the top-of-the-screen test (important content at the top before scroll).

- **Write email backwards:**
 - Step 1: Open new email
 - Step 2: Download attachment, if applicable
 - Step 3: Compose email
 - Step 4: Type subject line
 - Step 5: Type in address or addresses

This practice will help prevent embarrassing “Oops” emails about forgetting the attachment or sending before the message is ready.

Edit the thread of your replies to remove parts of the previous email that no longer apply or begin a new email thread.

Avoid anything that might be misinterpreted, such as sarcasm, humor, quotes or sayings.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

- Design your messages effectively to obtain the quickest and most effective replies.
- Consider cultural differences; you will be sending emails to people from all different cultures and countries.
- **Double-check before hitting the “Send” button.**
- Set up spell-check in “options” of your email account.
- Use a professional email address.

Email Etiquette Checklist

- Is your message really needed by the recipient?
- Should your message be a phone call or in-person conversation instead of an email?
- Is your message for routine rather than sensitive messages? (Email is not typically the best way to communicate a sensitive message.)
- Have you attached all materials referenced in the message?
- Have you carefully checked that your message is going to the correct recipients?
- Are you putting something in the email that you would not want someone else to see, such as gossip or talking negatively about someone? The general rule of thumb is if you would not be comfortable with your message being on the front page of a newspaper, then you should reconsider sending it at all.
- Has everyone necessary been copied on it? (You don't want to offend by leaving someone off.)
- Have you proofread your message carefully?
- Does your signature avoid offensive quotes? Does it need a quote at all?

Email Etiquette Points to Ponder

- When you send an email, do you expect a response - an acknowledgement – any way of knowing if your email was received?
- What do you do when you receive an email?
- Do you take for granted that someone received your email even though you did not receive any type of response?
- Do you think they are working on some type of answer to the possibly never received email?

Answers:

The solution to all four question from either the sender or recipient point of view is simply to respond immediately. Although you may not be able to address or answer the question from the email, just let them know that you actually received it and will get back as quickly as you can.

Emails are interactive communication – treat them as such.

Email Example:

The screenshot shows an email client interface with a blue header bar containing menu items: File, Message, Insert, Options, Format Text, Review, and Tell me what you want to do... Below the header is the email header area with fields for To, Cc, Bcc, and Subject. The To field contains Michael Harding <Michael.Harding@schilling-voigt.com>. The Subject field contains REQ: Your Reactions to Our Casual-Dress Policy. Below the header is the email body, which starts with a salutation 'Mike:' followed by a paragraph asking for input on a casual-dress policy. It includes a bulleted list of six questions and a closing paragraph with a deadline of April 17th. The email is signed off by Bill, with full contact information for William Laughton, President of Schilling & Voigt, LLP.

File Message Insert Options Format Text Review Tell me what you want to do...

To... Michael Harding <Michael.Harding@schilling-voigt.com>

Cc...

Bcc...

Send

Subject REQ: Your Reactions to Our Casual-Dress Policy

Mike:

Should we re-vamp our casual-dress policy? I am asking you and other members of our management team to consider the questions below as we decide whether to change our policy at Schilling and Voigt.

As you know, we adopted a casual business attire program several years ago. Some employees saw it as an employment benefit. To others it was a disaster because they did not know how to dress casually and still look professional. Since we originally adopted the policy, times have changed and the trend seems to be moving back toward more formal business attire. Here are some questions to consider:

- What is acceptable to wear on dress-down days?
- Should our policy restrict body art (tattoos) and piercing?
- How should supervisors react when clothing is offensive, tasteless, revealing, or sloppy?
- Is it possible to develop a uniform definition of acceptable casual attire?
- Do the disadvantages of a dress-down policy outweigh the advantages?
- Should we refine our dress-down policy or eliminate it?

Please give careful thought to these questions so that we can discuss them at our management meeting April 17th.

Bill

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Note that the Subject line summarizes the main idea of the message and uses REQ or “Action Required” to remind the receiver that a response is required. The email opens with the receiver’s name to express friendliness and mark the beginning of the message. The email starts directly, amplifies the main idea, and explains and discusses the topic.

As you look further into the message, notice that the writer uses document design (in this example, bullets) to improve readability. Also, consider columns, headings, enumerations, numbered lists, and so forth. In the closing, the writer uses appropriate closing etiquette by restating the requested action and dates (or deadlines). The final portion of the email contains full contact information.

EMAIL RESOURCES

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/636/01/>
- <http://101emailtippstips.com/>
- <http://www.businessinsider.com/email-etiquette-rules-barbara-pachter-2013-10>