Writing Professional E-Mails

- Use accurate Standard Written English (not chat lingo)
- Include a concise, informative subject
- Begin with a salutation
- Keep e-mail messages brief
- Provide adequate background information
- Make your messages easy to read for on-screen reading
- Close with an appropriate salutation, your name, and / or e-mail signature
- Be courteous and respectful in tone
- Remember that e-mail is not private
- Avoid flaming / inflammatory language
- Do not take delayed replies personally
- Re-read and revise before sending

Adapted from: Gray, Stacia, Deborah Murray, and Julie Brogno. Writing Communities and Identities: English 100, Kansas State University, 5th Ed. Manhattan: KS Publishing, Inc. 2007. 43-44.
Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

Use a concise, informative subject

– Due to the high volume of e-mails received by workplace professionals, an accurate subject line helps the reader manage messages received.

Limit emails to one subject

– In order for your e-mail reader to focus on the subject at hand, each message should have only one subject.

– If you have another subject to address, create a second email.
Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

Use an appropriate, respectful salutation, including your reader’s name.

- Because many people receive e-mails that are not specifically addressed to them, readers need to be explicitly addressed, with the appropriate level of formality for your relationship.

- Do not use first names unless you are on a first name basis already. Use Mr., Ms., Dr., etc. followed by last name as appropriate.

Keep e-mail messages brief AND thorough

- Use a simple, 3-part structure:
  1) Succinctly state your topic
  2) quickly summarize the reason for the message
  3) make your main point and offer supporting information.

- Do not assume that the reader knows the reason for your e-mail; state the reason in the first line of your message.

- Provide only enough background information to provide meaningful context, and when you quote from a previous e-mail, include the relevant lines of the previous e-mail conversation.
Make your e-mail message easy to read for on-screen reading.

- Using all lower case letters decreases readability, so use lower and upper case letters. Writing short paragraphs also helps readability, so rather than indenting, put blank lines between paragraphs.

Close with your full name or professional email signature

- Do not assume the reader knows who is sending the e-mail. Closing with your name indicates:
  - that your message is complete
  - Clarifies that you are the sender
  - Identifies for the reader the correct name to use when replying.
Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

- **A formal tone is appropriate for most professional e-mails**
  - This includes e-mails sent from students to faculty.
  - When contacting someone for the first time, a formal tone is appropriate.
  - When you have a close, personal relationship with someone, an informal tone may be appropriate, but this is the exception, not the rule.

- **Be courteous**
  - When the reader reads your message, it is easy to misinterpret the tone of an e-mail.
    - For example, a request in an e-mail to an instructor may come across as a demand or a desperate plea if you choose to leave out words of courtesy, or if you choose to leave imperative phrases dangling.
    - See next slide for examples.
DO

Dear Ms. Instructor,* (*use name)

I am contacting you regarding the email etiquette assignment for our Expos. I class (9:30 MWF). I do not understand what topic I am supposed to write about. Will you please e-mail me a reminder of the topic?

**Thank you,

    Joe Student

(** or Sincerely, or Thanks, or Cheers, or some appropriate salutation line)

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DO NOT

Instructor,

I have been drafting my essay. I need to know what MLA is ASAP.
**Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette**

**Remember that**

e-mail is not private

**DO**

Dear Ms. Instructor,

I am in the process of drafting my essay for unit 1, but due to an illness, I will be missing class today. I will try to make an appointment in the Writing Center to have a tutor review my essay.

Thank you,
Joe Student

**DO NOT**

Dear Ms. Instructor,

I have to miss class today because of a bladder infection that runs in my family. I cannot even make it out the door without problems.
Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

Avoid flaming or inflammatory language

- Flaming is when someone deliberately sends a hostile or insulting e-mail. If you are upset about an issue, wait to e-mail the person until you have had time to cool down.

You will regret sending an e-mail that displays strong emotion. If you want to discuss an issue that has caused you some concern, then e-mail a polite request to meet in person.

- Also, using all caps and too many exclamation points can create ‘flaming’ in your e-mail. Using all caps makes it seem as if you are SHOUTING at the reader, while too many exclamation points suggest unnecessary urgency and overexcitement.
Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

Do not take delayed replies personally.

- Sending an e-mail to a reader may be relatively quick, if servers are running as expected.
- However, even professionals who use e-mail frequently are not perpetually online.
- For example, instructors may have professional obligations that prevent viewing e-mail for 24 hours, or sometimes even several days.
  
  If you are not receiving replies to your e-mails, try asking the intended recipient if your e-mail has been received.

Re-Read to revise before sending

- After completing an e-mail message, take time to double-check to see if you have followed the appropriate e-mail etiquette for your reader.

  Before you click the ‘send’ button, double-check for typo’s, spelling errors, sentence structure problems, and any unclear communication. Test the readability of the message from your reader’s perspective.
  
  Taking time to revise will save embarrassment.