

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Over the past decade, email has surpassed the telephone as the preferred mode of business communication. This means that the ability to write and respond to email has become an important, if not an essential life skill.

Unfortunately, not everyone is as careful about their email behaviors as they should be. A poorly written email can miscommunicate much more than the point. It can also be a reflection of your professionalism, your work ethic, and your character.

It is possible to accurately represent your thoughts and make a good impression through email. Consider these tips to improve your electronic communication skills.

DO:

- **Start with an informative subject line:**
Choose a subject line that gives the reader a good idea of the topic, tone and urgency of the email. Subjects like "meeting date changed," or "suggestions for your proposal," are helpful, clear and concise.
- **Keep messages brief and to the point:**
Include only one issue per message. Overloading on email with too many topics leads to missed information.
- **Remember, email is *not* private:**
If you are using a business account, chances are, all email is considered company property and can be retrieved and examined upon request. Do not write anything in an email that you wouldn't be comfortable putting on a post-card for the whole office to see.

DON'T:

- **Let your emotions take over:**
Firing off an emotionally charged reply or an indignant response is never a good idea. Take a few hours or a day before hitting "send."
- **Overuse "reply all:"**
Use Blind Copy (BCC) and Courtesy Copy (CC) appropriately. BCC is not meant to keep others from seeing who you copied; it is meant to keep email addresses private when using large distribution lists. Be cautious with your use of CC; copy only people who are directly involved.
- **Use email to avoid confrontation:**
Email is generally not appropriate when sending emotionally charged, potentially confusing, or difficult-to-receive information.

Above all, remember that email is meant to make communication *easier*, not more difficult. Nothing can replace direct communication; if you are having trouble composing an email that accurately represents your thoughts, consider taking the conversation to the telephone, or to a face-to-face meeting.



Mercy Employee Assistance Program
1340 Blairs Ferry Rd., Suite A
Hiawatha, IA
(319) 398-6694
www.mercycare.org/eap