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

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.

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      - 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.

Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

- *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.

Reader-Centered E-mail Etiquette

_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)

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.**