

Kerry's Computer Coaching

Email Etiquette

An email may seem like the quickest and easiest way of communication with others. Avoid misunderstandings by following a few simple rules of email etiquette.

1. Do not overuse the high priority, urgent and important options

Ever heard of the boy who cried wolf? Well that situation is very relevant to emails. You should only use these special functions if something is of utmost importance and needs to be read immediately. People will catch on if you use them too frequently and your emails could be ignored!

2. DO NOT USE CAPTIALS

As you can see by the title, it is very aggressive and abusive in nature to use capitals unnecessarily. Never use capitals, it's the email equivalent of shouting right in someone's face and is extremely poor etiquette in emails. If you find yourself in a situation where you have typed a large email only to realise it is all in capitals, highlight the text and press Shift F3. This will make every letter a lowercase. Of course you will have to re-capitalise some words, but its a lot easier than rewriting the whole thing!

3. Spam

Never reply to spam, this just confirms your email address is active and you will continue to receive more and more spam. Always block an email address from which you receive spam.

4. Respond to all questions

If you are asked a number of questions in an email, be sure to answer each question so the sender does not need to come back to you and ask the question again. Pre-empting relevant questions is also good email etiquette.

5. Use a signature

Using a signature is an important part of email etiquette and tells people exactly who you are, how to contact you and any related businesses.

6. Read your email before sending

Never send an email without reading it and never send a message in anger. If you write a message when you are angry, save it to drafts, go have a break and come back and reread what you wrote. Chances are that on reflection, you will make changes. Rereading your email will help you get your message across clearer and ensure there is no dubiety over its meaning.

7. Chain letters

Do not forward chain. You can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

8. Use correct grammar, spelling and layout

There are a few steps you can take to ensure the recipients view your emails. Many users still use email systems that limit character length to 65 characters, so try to limit the length of emails. Make sure to keep a good layout with short sentences and using paragraphs. It is also important to spell-check your email when you are done. Many programs,

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such as Microsoft Outlook, include this function. Using special fonts is not wise, as many email systems may not be able to read them. Always use one of the key fonts such as Times New Roman or Arial.

9. Do not attach unnecessary files.

By sending large attachments you can annoy customers and even bring down their e-mail system. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. Moreover, you need to have a good virus scanner in place since your customers will not be very happy if you send them documents full of viruses!

10. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

11. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

12. Use a meaningful subject.

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a company requesting information about a product, it is better to mention the actual name of the product, e.g. 'Product A information' than to just say 'product information' or the company's name in the subject.

13. Do not request delivery and read receipts unnecessarily.

This may annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. It may not work as the recipient may have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it.

14. Add disclaimers to your emails.

It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect your company from liability. Consider the following scenario: an employee accidentally forwards a virus to a customer by email. The customer decides to sue your company for damages. If you add a disclaimer at the bottom of every external mail, saying that the recipient must check each email for viruses and that it cannot be held liable for any transmitted viruses, this will surely be of help to you in court (read more about [email disclaimers](#)). Another example: an employee sues the company for allowing a racist email to circulate the office. If your company has an email policy in place and adds an email disclaimer to every mail that states that employees are expressly required not to make defamatory statements, you have a good case of proving that the company did everything it could to prevent offensive emails.