Email Etiquette for Students

OWL
Online Writing Lab
Purdue University
owl.english.purdue.edu
Why is Email Etiquette Important?

• We interact more and more with the written word all the time
• With large, impersonal lectures it becomes harder to discuss questions or problems with teachers
• Without immediate feedback from the reader, it’s easy to be misunderstood
Elements of Email Etiquette

- Basics
- Tone
- Attachments
- Complaints
- Good topics for email
- Bad topics for email
The Basics

• When mailing a teacher, ALWAYS include your **full name, class period or division**

• Include your class and what the email is specifically regarding in the subject

**Example**

Janie Daniels, MWF
8:30-9:20 a.m.
Division 0006

**Subject:**
CPT 141: Project 3 Proposal
The Basics

• Think twice about whether or not the content of your email is appropriate for virtual correspondence - once you hit Send, anyone might be able to read it

• Try to keep the email brief (one screen length)

• Respond to emails within the same time span you would a phone call

• Check for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors before clicking Send

• Use a professional font, not decorative
Tone

• Write in a positive tone
  – *When I complete the assignment* versus *If I complete the assignment*

• Avoid using negative words
  – *Words that begin with “un, non, or ex” or end with “less”*

• Use smiles 😊, winks ;-) and other graphical symbols only when appropriate

• Use contractions to add a friendly tone
Attachments

• When you are sending attachments, include in the email the filename, what format it is in, and the version of the program

  – Attached: “Project3Proposal.doc” This file is in Microsoft Word 2007.

• Consider sending files in rich text format (rtf) or portable document format (pdf) to ensure compatibility
Complaints

• You should briefly state the history of the problem to provide context for the problem
• Explain the attempts you made previously to resolve the problem
• Show why it is critical for the problem to be resolved by your reader
• Offer suggestions on ways you think it can be resolved or how you are willing to help in the matter
Example

Dr. Lambert:

The review that we had the period before the final was not accurate. As a result, the grades we received could have been incorrect. The T.A.s who led the review gave incorrect information. I would like to suggest that you ask students who were at the review which information the T.A.s gave incorrectly and account for those errors in our grades. There have been a number of complaints from fellow classmates who feel the same way. Please take this into consideration. Thank you.
Good Topics for Email

• You should email your teacher if:
  – You have an easy question that can be answered in a paragraph or less
  – You have an assignment that you are allowed to submit via email
Bad Topics for Email

• There are some rules that it’s best to follow, such as:
  – Don’t try to turn in an assignment through email if your teacher has specified against it
  – If you have to get an extension for an assignment, do it in person
  – Don’t bring up any topic that will require continuous conversation
  – If things become heated, there is a large risk for misunderstanding, so it’s best to talk face-to-face
For More Information

• Purdue Writing Lab
  – Heavilon 226
  – (765) 494-3723

• Online Writing Lab
  – http://owl.english.purdue.edu
The End