

Writing a Professional Email

Digital communication runs in the opposite direction to our human nature. Humans depend heavily on verbal and nonverbal communication cues such as body language, eye contact, and tone to really understand what a person actually means

Email and other digital communications don't allow us to pick up on these natural communication tell-tale signs.. It's super important to know how to craft messages that are clear and accurate to what we want to communicate.

This is particularly vital to our professional lives. Knowing how to write an effective email can help you in the following ways:

- Reputation: Demonstrating reliability and efficiency can make or break your professional reputation in the eyes of colleagues, managers, and potential clients or employers.
- Providing meaningful information for the people that need your opinion creates and strengthens professional relationships.
- Using clear language streamlines processes and avoids counterproductive confusion.
- Respectful communication can help land the job, get a raise, vacation time, or work extension you want.

Tips to write a professional email:

From crafting an attention-grabbing subject line to deciding on the proper sign-off and everything in between, all parts of an email serve a purpose.

Here are eight tips on how to write a professional email. Pay attention to these tips as you will be asked to practise this in your very own email assignment.

1. The right greeting

Greetings in an email are important. We always want to make a good first impression, and choosing the right salutation is the way to put your best foot forward.

Start the email with an appropriate greeting, which will change depending on your relationship with the recipient. The main salutations are the less formal “Hi” and “Hello” or more formal “Dear”:

If you're writing directly to a colleague or someone you have a familiar professional relationship with, you can start with the following, start with “Hello” or “Hi.”

If you're writing to someone you have never met or have a formal professional relationship with, like a hiring manager, or a new or potential client, start with “Dear.”

“Dear Sir,” “Dear Madam,” “Dear Mr.” or “Dear Mrs.” might be overly formal for some recipients, read as too old school, or even unintentionally misgender and upset someone. If you don't know how someone prefers to be addressed, it's best to stay gender-neutral.

You should also always double-check to ensure you've spelled the recipient's name correctly. If this is their first time writing and their full name isn't included on their contact information, consult their LinkedIn profile or another social media app. If they have a Gmail account, check their full name by typing their email into the recipient box, hitting the tab button, hovering over the email address, and clicking on their profile picture.

If you're writing a business communication to send out to an email list, start with “To whom it may concern” for formal greetings or “Hello, everyone” for a group of recipients you have a casual relationship with.

2. Understand your intention

What's an email for? Before you start writing, think about what exactly you hope to accomplish with your email. Understanding your motives will guide the message's tone. A company-wide email needs to be written more formally than a response to a coworker in an email chain. Regardless of what you want to accomplish, you need to write appropriately.



3. Explain Your Intention

Once you have figured out your intention, let the recipient know why you're writing to them. Reasons for writing professional emails include:

- Asking for help from a manager
- Calling in a favour from a co-worker
- Replying to an earlier inquiry
- Following-up on something
- Offering clarity about an issue
- Saying thank you

Regardless of what you're writing about, make sure the intention of the email is clear from the start. Here are some examples of statements you can include early in your email:

- I wanted to send a follow-up email regarding our meeting yesterday.
- I'm writing to let you know about the team meeting on Thursday.
- I wanted to know if you have time to review my presentation.
- I want to discuss my upcoming vacation time.

4. Get to the Point

The best email format for professional communication is writing a quick and concise message. Avoid lots of text. Keeping things short lets your recipient know that you respect their time.

State what you want clearly in the body of your email with 3–5 sentences and no more than three brief paragraphs.

It was a great meeting with you yesterday. I really liked your ideas for the new promotional materials. I wanted to follow up on the conversation and ask: Would it be better to create a video or write a blog post? Please let me know what you think.

I read through your first draft, and the language is a little informal. I've left some edits, but can you please refer to the style guide and fix the language? Let me know if you need any help. If you want to talk about something more that requires a lengthier discussion, an email isn't your best form of communication. Send an email briefly explaining what you'd like to discuss and set up a meeting.

For example:

- I'm feeling stuck on the social media content for the new account. Do you have some time this week to hop on Zoom and discuss strategy?
- I think there is some confusion about the scope of the new project. Let's schedule a check-in to review this together. Are you available to talk tomorrow?

5. Send Your Best Regards

Keeping things short isn't the only way to show the recipient of your email that you respect their time. You can also let them know with a proper email closing.

Some examples include:

- I look forward to hearing back from you.
- Your feedback on the presentation was really helpful.
- I always love working with you and look forward to our next project.

Always be sure to say thank you:

- Thank you for your time.
- Thank you for reading.
- I always appreciate your input.
- I appreciate your taking the time to meet with me yesterday.

6. Sign Off Properly

There are many options for signing off in an email, but it's best not to try to reinvent the wheel. Stick with a safe option like:

- Sincerely,
- Thanks again,
- Best,
- Warmly,

7. Write an Appropriate Email Signature:

An email signature is a useful space to give additional information about yourself. A work-appropriate email signature might include the following information about you:

- Full name
- Position and company name
- Additional contact information, such as a phone number
- Links to relevant social media platforms

8. Proofread

You've spent all this time writing the most professional email possible – so don't rush to hit send without looking it all over.

Proofread your message to ensure that your intention is clear and straightforward and that you don't sound demanding or presumptuous.

Check that there aren't any typos or grammar mistakes. If you don't have the copy-editing skills to go over your message with a fine-toothed comb, download a grammar app for extra help.

If you're forwarding your personal and business emails into a single inbox, double-check that you're sending from the appropriate email account.

Specific work situations require specific types of correspondence. All of the other rules still apply; whether you are requesting a cover letter or sending in your resignation, keep it short, concise, and respectful.

Here's an example:

A Follow-up after a job interview:

Address the recipient by their first name, express gratitude for their time, emphasise your interest in the job and ask about the next steps.

Dear [interviewer's name],

I hope all is well! Thank you again for the opportunity to interview for [job title] with [company name]. It was a pleasure to get to know you and the team.

I'm following up to see if there are any updates regarding [job title] from my interview on [date]. I'm really excited about the opportunity. If you need any more information, please let me know.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon!

Best regards,

[Your name]

(Source: <https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-write-a-professional-email>)

Assignment:

Using the above information, draft an email to one of the Khula Trainers and imagine that they are an employer that you would like to work for.

Your task is to send an email asking about whether an opportunity you saw advertised is still available. Think carefully about all the tips we've provided and do your best.

Remember with time and practice Communication is a skill anybody can master...even you! Yes you!

If you are not a part of the Khula Education programme, engage with someone that you trust to provide honest feedback.

For more information on the topic of professional communication, you can refer to Course 1 where we share more tools on growing your Professional Communication Skills.