

**YOU'VE GOT MAIL!**  
**EMAIL ETIQUETTE - "NETIQUETTE"**  
 From [emailreplies.com](http://emailreplies.com)

1. **Be concise and to the point:** Remember that reading an email is harder than reading printed communications.
2. **Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.**
3. **Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation:** Improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of your company.
4. **Make it personal.**
5. **Use templates for frequently used responses.**
6. **Answer swiftly:** Each email should be replied to within at least 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day.
7. **Do not attach unnecessary files.**
8. **Use proper structure and layout:** Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph.
9. **Do not overuse the High Priority option.**
10. **Do not write in CAPITALS:** IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS, IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING.
11. **Don't leave out the message thread:** In other words, click "Reply" instead of "New Mail."
12. **Add disclaimers to your emails.**
13. **Read the email before you send it:** Reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.
14. **Do not overuse "Reply to All."**
15. **Take care with abbreviations and emoticons:**

**Email... the Last Chance for Developing Writing Skills?**  
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Electronic mail (email) may be a "last chance" medium for developing the writing skills of students and employees. Students, and just about everyone else, are now addicted to the electronic medium, and there is no turning back. A search of the Internet will yield numerous books, articles, threaded discussions, and so forth on the so-called "netiquette" or the acceptable do's and don'ts of writing electronic mail. My purpose here is not to repeat easily found information with a few keywords on the Internet about email netiquette, but to ask the reader to reflect more comprehensively on the nature of the changing communication medium and the positive effects these changes may have on improving students' and workers' writing skills.

Email requires writing -- lots of writing -- sorting, categorizing, deleting, typing, and evaluating. If nothing else, email reveals the problems the writer has with grammar, thought construction, paragraph development, style, and other matters related to cognition. Workers find it difficult to rely on traditional form letters when writing email, making email a creative writing activity. Additionally, email has its own "language" made up of icons, abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, and other examples of metaphorical writing. Although emailers may not realize they are employing metaphors while writing email or surfing the Internet, they are learning new ways of thinking about things and comparing one thing to another -- and discovering ways to develop metacognitive skills. If working professionals and students were encouraged to write email messages in the same ways they ordinarily write memos or letters, the sheer number of communiqués would improve each writer's ability.

In the professional writing environment, email writing should include the same scrutiny as written communication does. A review of business writing basics should produce the same results in email communication as do the traditional hard copies or occasional phone call. However, one problem surfaces quickly -- some messages are casual, not business. In these cases, the writer has much more freedom of expression, perhaps even using a stream of consciousness technique, but then, stream of consciousness is a genre worthy of consideration.

The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations, and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what an emoticon means, don't use it.

16. **Be careful with formatting.**
17. **Take care with rich text and HTML messages:** Be aware that when you send an email in Rich Text or HTML format, the sender might be able to receive only plain text emails.
18. **Do not forward chain letters.**
19. **Do not request delivery and read receipts.**
20. **Do not ask to recall a message.**
21. **Do not copy a message or attachment without permission:** If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.
22. **Do not use email to discuss confidential information.**
23. **Use a meaningful subject.**
24. **Use active instead of passive voice:** "We will process your order today" sounds better than "Your order will be processed today."
25. **Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.**
26. **Avoid long sentences:** Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters.
27. **Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.**
28. **Don't forward virus hoaxes.**
29. **Keep your language gender neutral:** Avoid using sexist language such as "The user should add a signature by configuring his email program."
30. **Don't reply to spam.**

Email seems to lie somewhere between written communication and oral communication. With careful wording, the lack of non-verbal communication cues may force the writer to learn a larger vocabulary and express himself or herself more carefully, especially after a few misunderstood messages and the consequences thereof. Could it be that because today's workers usually write their own correspondence (email or otherwise), actually "doing" writing electronically can improve skills, depending on one's approach and support system (e.g., tutors, mentors, resources)? In conclusion, if students, teachers, and other professionals begin to consider email a learning environment rather than a platform for discussing the degradation of the English language, then we can begin to use email as a tool for improved writing skills.

### Avoiding Padded Phrases

Revise	The committee will meet at an early date.
To	The committee will meet soon.
Revise	The contractor will oftentimes issue regular progress reports during the time that the contract is in effect.
To	The contractor will often issue regular progress reports while the contract is in effect.
Revise	I recently met with the city attorney with reference to your case.
To	I recently met with the city attorney about your case.
Revise	We missed our deadline due to the fact that a strike occurred.
To	We missed our deadline because a strike occurred.
Revise	We cannot accept new clients at the present time.
To	We cannot accept new clients now.
Revise	We have received four complaints in connection with the project.
To	We have received four complaints about the project.
Revise	In order to meet the deadline, we must work overtime.
To	To meet the deadline, we must work overtime.
Revise	She was thinking in terms of subcontracting much of the work.

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### Some Writing Tips

Use the precise word or phrase.

**precede** means "to be, go, or come ahead of " (the preceding page)

**proceed** means "to continue," "to go on," "to advance"

**insure** means "to guarantee against financial loss" (insure the car)

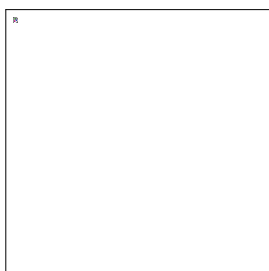
**ensure** means "to make sure or certain" (ensure that you're here)

**effect** as a noun means "result"; as a verb to "bring about," "to accomplish"

**affect** means "to influence"; "to act upon"; "to alter";

"to assume"; "to adopt"

To	She was thinking about subcontracting much of the work.
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