



EMAIL GUIDE

Student Success Center + English
Language Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Introduction

B. Etiquette

C. Step-by-Step

D. Templates

E. Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

While email is a valuable communication tool, it can pose challenges for many writers. As a somewhat new form of communication, acceptable norms for writing emails are still being determined; therefore, miscommunications can occur when people have different expectations of how and when to send emails. Emails are sent to various people (friends, professors, family, business professionals, etc.) for numerous reasons, so it is important to think about your purpose, audience, and desired outcome while writing them. If you do not, miscommunications can easily occur.

To avoid miscommunications, you should first determine if writing an email is the most effective form of communication.

INTRODUCTION

Emails are effective when:

- You are writing to someone who is hard to reach via phone or does not come to your campus regularly.
- You want to share information that is not time sensitive.
- You are sending an electronic file.
- You need documented proof of communication.

Emails are ineffective when:

- Your message is long and complicated and requires further discussion rather than a simple answer.
- Information is confidential (email is never private).
- Your message is emotionally charged or the tone could be misinterpreted.

If you've determined an email is effective for your purpose, continue reading this guide.

ETIQUETTE: BASIC SET-UP

- Use your jhU email account for all academic and professional communication. Note that you can change the settings on your account to reflect your English name, if you use one.

ywu281@jhu.edu → alice.wu@jhu.edu

- Make sure your phone and computer are set to English, otherwise your email will come through in another alphabet and likely be sent to the spam folder.

吴越 <9987185005033@qq.com → ???

- If you have multiple email accounts routed into one, make sure the response setting also comes from your jhu account. Again, another email address will probably look unprofessional and show up in another alphabet, making you look immature at best and unidentifiable at worst.
- Unless you truly will not be able to respond to any emails for an extended period of time, it is best to avoid using an “out of office” automatic reply. These are mostly used for inter-office communication where an alternate contact is provided.

- You can set up a “signature” for your email. It’s probably best to avoid quotations, unusual fonts, colors and especially, graphics.

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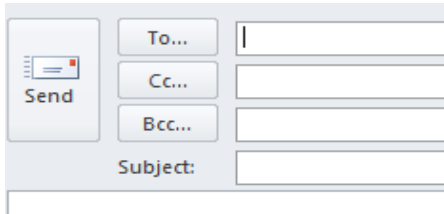
100 International Drive

Baltimore, MD, 21202

Mobile: (410) 821-4420

Email: alice.wu@jhu.edu

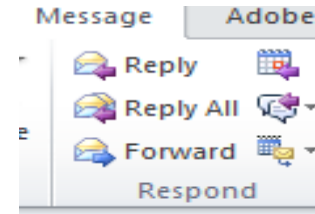
ETIQUETTE: SENDING + RESPONDING



To: use this space to include the recipient(s) who you would like to respond to your email.

Cc: use this space to include the recipient(s) who you want to read, but not necessarily respond to, your email.

Bcc: use this to include either a long list of recipients who don't need to see each other's contact information or to secretly include someone on an email. This function should be used sparingly.



Reply: use this function to reply directly to the sender alone.

Reply All: use this function to reply to the sender, as well as anyone who was cc'ed or bcc'ed. This should be used carefully.

Forward: use this function to send an email you have received to another recipient.

STEP-BY-STEP: READING AN EMAIL

When reading an email, be sure to pay attention to the following abbreviations and phrases, and act accordingly.

ASAP- As soon as possible. If you receive an email that includes this abbreviation, you need to take action immediately.

FYI- For your information. An email that includes this (often in the subject line) doesn't usually require a response, and is for informational purposes only.

COB- Close of business. If you receive an email asking you to do something by "COB," that means you have until the end of the working day (5:00) of the due date to do it.

RSVP- This stands for the French phrase, "repondez, s'il vous plaît," which means "please reply." You need to respond to this email and tell the sender whether or not you will be attending the event. This response signifies a **commitment**.

Regrets only- This means the host will assume you will attend an event, unless you tell them you will not be there. In this situation, you only need to respond if you **CANNOT** attend.

STEP-BY-STEP: SUBJECT LINE

Every email needs a subject line. Consider these tips when writing one.

- Keep it short. Put the most important words at the beginning of the subject line in case they are viewing the email on their smartphone.
- Do not include “filler” words, such as “hello” or “greetings.”
- Be clear and specific about the topic of the email.
- Use logical keywords so the recipient can easily search for your email.
- Only use your name if you are applying for a job.
- If someone has referred you for a job, be sure to use his/her name.

STEP-BY-STEP SUBJECT LINE: EXAMPLES

Job Application:

- Sally Brown-Marketing Associate candidate
- Referred by Michael Scott for Human Resources Assistant

Interview Follow up:

- Sally Brown following up on Marketing Associate position
- Marketing Associate interview follow up

Interview thank you:

- Thank you for the interview

Introduction:

- An introduction: Nicholas Barnaby-Catherine Anderson

Meeting invitation:

- Management Consultants: Thursday 10:00am
- Chat about Extron Project at 3? (informal)

Request for feedback:

- Feedback request by COB 3/24

Requesting information:

- Inquiring about design services

STEP-BY-STEP: GREETINGS

Last (or Family) Name



Name: Melvin Gordon



First name

For all formal e-mail communication use Dear + Recipient's Title + Last name. If you're sending an email to your professor, Melvin Gordon, you would use the greeting:

Dear Professor Gordon,

The titles "Professor" or "Dr." are used for both men or women. If the person you are emailing does not have one of those titles, use Mr. for men:

Dear Mr. Gordon,

And when emailing a woman, use "Ms." So, if you are emailing your advisor, Sandra Green, use the greeting:

Dear Ms. Green,

*Note: The title "Officer" is never used, unless you are addressing a police officer. Also, the email address is not necessarily someone's full name. For example:

krowedd1@jhu.edu → ~~Dear krowedd1~~

Instead, it should read: Dear Ms. Rowedder,

STEP-BY-STEP: CLOSINGS

Acceptable Closings for Business/Academic Email

- Best,
- Kind regards,
- Regards,
- Sincerely,

Inappropriate Closings for Business/Academic Email

- Love,
- Yours/Yours truly,
- xoxo

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

One of the biggest pitfalls of electronic communication is tone. What would sound like a reasonable request face-to-face could sound rude and demanding in print. Pay careful attention to the modals you use. *Would* and *could* are generally considered to be more polite than *will* and *can*.

Inappropriate	Better option
What's the problem?	Is something wrong?
Please help me.	Are you able to assist/help me?
I want to cancel my appointment...	Could I please cancel my appointment?
I want to know how...	Could you please tell me how...?
I need to reschedule...	I would like to reschedule...
Please drop my scheduled...	Could I please cancel my scheduled appointment...?
Cancel my appointment...	Would it be possible to cancel my scheduled appointment...?
I have some problems here.	I am having some issues
I want to know why...	I would like to know
I need your help.	Could you kindly help me?
I want to make an appointment with you	Do you have time to meet with me sometime this week?
Could you explain it more to me?	I'm not sure I understood X. Could we meet to discuss it further?

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

Exclamation marks!!!!!!

When emailing or texting friends and family, exclamation marks are fine. But in an academic or professional email, you want to avoid them. Exceptions can be made when you are praising someone (great job!), but otherwise can easily be misinterpreted as either angry, immature, or too enthusiastic.

“Cut out all those exclamation marks. An exclamation mark is like laughing at your own joke.” –F. Scott Fitzgerald

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

Dear Professor Bernard,

I'm working on a project on minimizing the risk in developing property. I'd like you to look at it and give me some feedback. Could you please get it back to me by next Tuesday? Thank you for your time.

Best,

Ross Gellar

Problems

I'd like you to look at it and give me some feedback.

This is not asking for help, this is demanding help. Acknowledge that the person you are asking for help is very busy and that you understand they may not be able to assist you. Use modals to ask politely.

Could you please get it back to me by next Tuesday?

Remember, this professor has not agreed to help you yet, so giving him/her deadlines is not helpful. When explaining the project you need help with, tell them when the project is due and which aspect of the project you need help with. They can then decide whether or not they have time to assist you before then.

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

Example with more polite tone:

Dear Professor Bernard,

I'm working on a project on minimizing the risk in developing property, which is due next Tuesday. If you have time, would you mind taking a look at it and giving me some feedback? I'm especially concerned about X. Thank you for your time.

Best,

Ross Gellar

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

Dear Professor Vance,

I don't understand the lecture yesterday about finance reform. I want to make an appointment with you tomorrow at 12:00 so you can explain it more to me.

Best,

Janice

Problems

I want to make an appointment with you tomorrow at 12:00

Appointments need to be requested. Ask politely if the professor has time to meet with you. Offer at least two times that work for you to minimize the number of emails that need to go back and forth.

So you can explain it more to me.

This is not only demanding, but you are also blaming the professor, implying that he/she did not explain it sufficiently in class.

PROBLEM AREA: TONE

Email with a more polite tone:

Dear Professor Vance,

I'm still a bit confused by aspects of the lecture yesterday about finance reform. Would it be possible to schedule an appointment with you this week to discuss it further? I am free either Tuesday or Thursday afternoon, or Friday morning. Thank you.

Best,

Janice Lin

TEMPLATE: ABSENCE

Explaining Lateness

Subject: Quantitative Finance 4/29

Dear Professor Scott,

I am writing to let you know that I will be late for class because there is an urgent maintenance issue at my apartment now. I apologize for the short notice; I will be at school by 2:00PM.

See you in class.

Best,

Monica Gellar

Explaining an absence

Subject: Appointment to discuss X

Dear Professor Beasley,

I missed your class last week because of an illness. I've already talked to some of my classmates about the materials I missed, but I don't think I completely understand X. Could I make an appointment to meet with you tomorrow at 2pm or 5pm to discuss it?

Best,

Joe Tribianni

NOTE: EXPLAINING AN ABSENCE

Remember, when you email a professor to explain that you will not be in class, you are not asking permission to be absent, you are simply informing your professor that you will not be in class that day. Do not “request a leave” or ask if it’s ok if you are absent.

- If you are sick, simply tell your professor that you are not feeling well, or are “under the weather.” DO NOT include details of your sickness or symptoms.
- Scheduled doctor/dentist appointments are not considered an excused absence. Schedule an appointment after class.

TEMPLATE: APPOINTMENT REQUEST

Subject: Appointment request to discuss X

Dear Dr. Watson,

After reviewing my notes on your lecture about X last week, I still have some questions about it. I'm specifically confused about... Would it be possible to schedule an appointment sometime this week to go over it? I'm available Wednesday and Friday afternoon this week. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Megan Chen

Subject: Seeking advice on X

Dear Professor Myers,

I'm interested in a career in X, and I know you worked in this field at Morgan Stanley for many years. If you have the time, would it be possible to meet to discuss your experience? I would like some advice on what I should be doing now to prepare for this career, and I would really appreciate any advice you could give me. Thank you.

Regards,

Mike Wayne

TEMPLATE: FAVOR/QUESTION

Subject: Request for more idioms materials

Dear Professor Halpert,

I really like the idioms part of your lecture and I have recently finished the idiom book "Speak Business English like an American." I have really learned a lot of useful idioms. Do you have any further material regarding idioms? I would appreciate it if you could recommend something for me.

Thanks.

Best,

Rachel Green

Subject: Request for investment summary feedback

Dear Professor Schrute,

I am having a problem with the financial report I'm working on, which is due in two weeks. I've already completed the forecasting portion, but I am not sure what should be included in the investment summary.

Attached is my investment summary draft and the related worksheet. I was wondering if you could take a look at it if you have the time and give me some suggestions. I would really appreciate it.

Thank you.

Best,

Phoebe Buffay

BEFORE YOU HIT “SEND”

- ✓ Did you spell the recipient’s name correctly?
 - Misspelling the name of the person you are writing looks unprofessional, particularly when that person’s name is part of their email address. Don’t use a nickname unless the recipient has said it’s ok. Example: Don’t call “Patrick” “Pat,” unless he tells you that you may do so.
- ✓ Did you hit “Reply All” when you should have hit “Reply”?
 - See “Etiquette: Sending and Responding”
- ✓ Does your email look like a text message?
 - You don’t want to write an academic or professional email the way you would speak or text. Double check to make sure you haven’t used text abbreviations or shortened things like “going to” to “gonna.”
- ✓ Did you use the spell check function?
 - Spell check will not pick up every mistake, so make sure you read through it as well!
- ✓ Did you include a subject line?
- ✓ Do you also have an appropriate greeting and closing?
- ✓ If responding to a message, have you answered the questions that were asked?
 - Failing to answer questions in a response, or asking questions that were answered in the previous email, shows that you have not taken the time to thoroughly read the email.
- ✓ Were you angry or upset when you wrote the email?
 - If so, wait 24 hours (sleep on it) before hitting “send.”

AFTER YOU HIT “SEND”

Be patient!

- Remember, emails are not for issues that are time sensitive. A phone call is better if an immediate response is necessary.
- If you have sent an email after 5pm or on the weekends, you shouldn't expect a response until the recipient returns to work. Many people do not check their professional email accounts on their personal time.

Follow-up:

If you have asked for assistance, a follow-up email may be necessary. It's possible that your email got lost in the shuffle or it may have slipped the recipient's mind. That doesn't mean they don't want to help you, it may just mean that a reminder is necessary. Wait a few days before following up. They may just be working through a busy inbox!