EMAIL ETIQUETTE TIPS

The world of work runs on email. Yet most of the emails sent every day are poorly written -- and that probably includes yours. Use these tips to email more effectively and communicate more professionally.

DO’S

✔️ **Know your audience.** Your e-mail greeting and sign-off should be consistent with the level of respect and formality of the person who will be reading it – mirror the language they speak and the relationship you have with them (formal vs. relaxed).
  - Lead with “Dear,” “Hello,” and their first name or a more formal “Mr.” or “Ms.”
  - Conclude with “Best regards,” or “Thanks”

✔️ **Keep emails brief and to the point,** but be sure to include any relevant information that the recipient will need to know.
  - Include a brief description of any attachments you’ve included.
  - **TIP:** When a topic has lots of details that need to be explained and will lead to many questions and confusion, opt to speak over the phone, or in-person instead.

✔️ **Reply to the initial email,** to maintain a conversation thread that keeps all the details in one place.

✔️ **Think about who should know about the information you’re providing and CC:** them.

✔️ **If you are emailing a sizeable group of people,** consider using **BCC:** to ensure their privacy.

✔️ **When sending an email that requests action from multiple people,** be clear about **who is responsible** for taking each action. Doing so reduces unnecessary confusion, back and forth, and double work.

✔️ **Check and return emails promptly,** even if only to say, “I received your message but won’t be able to give it my full attention until next week.”

✔️ **Include a signature** containing your full name, department, and phone number. Not only does an official signature add validation to your email, but it also lets people know how to reach you, without having to search.

✔️ **Set up an Automatic Reply / Out of Office** automated message before going away on vacation.

✔️ **Spell check,** spell check, spell check!
  - **TIP:** Outlook allows you to set your preferences to spell check the message when you click Send.

✔️ **When sending email containing confidential content,** always make this clear by stating that it should not be forwarded or shared.

✔️ **Use a subject line** that reflects what your email is about. A descriptive subject gives your contact an idea of the urgency of your message and makes it easier to track later on.

✔️ **Stay organized by using a filing system** to help manage your emails. Having specific folders makes it easier to find emails by narrowing your search from the entire inbox, to that particular folder.
  - **TIP:** Outlook allows you to create rules that will sort emails, as they come in. Rules can be set up to move emails to the folder you specify when they come from “Joe Schmoe” or say, “Project Update” in the subject.
DON’TS

✅ Don’t use “Hey” as your greeting. Instead use “Hello” or “Hi.”

✅ Don’t assume that being cc’d always requires a response. You may have been cc’d as an FYI, and not required to respond.

✅ Don’t hit Reply All to an email you have been cc’d on unless everyone on the email chain needs to read your response.
  - Always ask yourself whether everyone needs to read your response.
  - How you use reply all completely depends on the situation, so use your judgment. Sometimes, it helps to have everyone on the same page (e.g., one person’s response has an impact on others).

✅ Don’t send too many attachments (more than two at a time - unless it’s been specifically requested).
  - If you share access to the same department/network folders, send a link to the file location instead.
  - **TIP:** PDF attachments are ideal because they can be successfully opened on all computers.

✅ Don’t over-email. If you have a question for discussion with someone that sits on your floor, resort to old-fashioned face-to-face communication.

✅ Don’t rush – take the time to make your emails professional and **read them over** before clicking send. If they are scattered, disorganized, or contain mistakes, it may leave the impression that you are disorganized and careless.

✅ Don’t forget to make sure your emails are properly formatted and easy-to-read. If you have a lot to say, either make a bulleted list, or attach a separate file.
  - **TIP:** When in doubt, have someone proofread an important email message, or send a draft to your supervisor to ensure it’s ready to send. It’s always better to err on the side of caution!

✅ Avoid using emoji’s, acronyms, word shortcuts, and excessive exclamation points (e.g., 4 u, LOL).
  - **TIP:** When using a McGill acronym that you are unsure whether the recipient is familiar with, it’s best to spell it out and place the acronym in parentheses, the first time you refer to it.

✅ Don’t send emails when experiencing **highly negative emotions**. Emails written to vent, express frustration, or put others down are unprofessional – end of discussion.
  - **TIP:** Be aware of tone. Email seems a lot more casual than it is, so many are tempted to relax their professional standards.

✅ Don’t neglect to use the email folder conventions your unit prefers, when using a generic email account (e.g., TLSgraphicts@mcgill.ca). Inquire if there is a standard and continue to apply it.