

Make your emails count: How to write to your instructors

Introduction

Teaching and Learning Services presents a brief instructional video entitled: *Make your emails count: How to write to your instructors*

Do you want to make a good impression on your instructors? If you do, remember that emails are professional communications and not texts. Therefore, it's important to send emails that are polite and to the point.

Here are some tips about how to write a professional email.

Think of an email as having three parts: a *beginning*, a *middle* and a *closing*.

Beginning

Let's start with the first part, the *beginning*.

Write an informative subject line so that your instructors know immediately why you're writing even before opening the email. Here are examples of appropriate subject lines:

- MATH 333: Request
- MATH 333: Request for Assignment Extension
- MATH 333: Request for Meeting
- MATH 333: Follow-up on class absence

Don't write a subject line like "Can I meet with you?" because it doesn't let your instructors immediately know what course you're in or why you're writing. And don't leave the subject line blank. That's also not informative.

Next, address your instructors appropriately. Use a title and family name. That's respectful and polite. If you're not sure whether to use "Dr." or "Prof.," choose "Prof.," Here are examples of appropriate ways to address instructors in an email:

- Dear Professor Lee,
- Dear Prof. Lee,
- Dear Dr. Lee,

Note that in each example, the family name is followed by a comma. Don't begin an email with the following:

- Dear Prof., - a family name must follow.
- Dear Carmen, - a first name alone is not appropriate.
- Hello, - Omitting a title and name might appear impolite or unprofessional.

Middle

Let's move on to the second part, the *middle* of an email. Be clear about the purpose of your email. For example, do you need an accommodation? Like an extended due date? First, concisely explain your situation. Second, politely ask for an accommodation. But before emailing your instructor, always check if the answer to your question can be found in the course outline.

Closing

Finally, we have the last part of an email, the *closing*. End your email with a closing sentence, such as: "Thank you for your time." Below that sentence, include your first name and your family name, and below your name, include your McGill ID number. For example:

Thank you for your time.
Robin Soto
ID 1234987

Proofreading

Don't forget to proofread your email before clicking on the *Send* button. Remember that you're not texting or chatting online, so always check for correct spelling and grammar; proper capitalization; and appropriate punctuation. Also, write complete sentences. If you don't proofread, your instructors might think that you're too lazy to proofread or that your assignments will be submitted without being proofread.

Official communication

Note that for any official communication with your instructors, either use your McGill email account (@mail.mcgill.ca), or, send email from myCourses if your instructors have requested this.

This video has been brought to you by McGill's Teaching and Learning Services. Teaching and Learning Services is on the web at www.mcgill.ca/tls.