

A Guide to Email Etiquette



Writing emails to individuals you don't know well (or at all!) can be tricky. We've developed this guide to give you some tips and tricks to fall back on the next time you have to reach out virtually and establish a connection.

Steps You can Take to Craft an Articulate Email:

1. Start by finding out the person's (or organization's) preferred name and title so you refer to them correctly. Most business and educational institutions have directories where you can look up the individual's info.
 - a. ProTip: If the individual has an MD or DO, their title is Doctor. If an individual has a Ph.D., you can call them Doctor or Professor in an email. If an individual has a terminal degree like an MFA or JD and are your teacher, you can use professor. If all else fails, to be on the safe side, if you're emailing an educator at the college level, use the honorific "Professor" before their last or family name.
2. Include a pleasantry after their title: "Hope you're having a good week" or something along those lines is always appropriate and allows you a chance to collect your thoughts.
3. Get to the point quickly and concisely. Make it clear to your audience what your concern, issue, or focus is on.
 - a. ProTip: use clear language. Remove all I think, I feel, I believe statements to make your point more concisely.
4. End with a thank you and make sure you have a clear email signature.
 - a. For high school and college students, the signature generally includes your name, your graduation institution and year, and your involvement in any extracurriculars (limit to your two most important).

Template of an Email:

Hello _____,

Greeting. Point in writing to the individual or organization. Explanation of any steps you've taken to do this work. A thank you for their consideration,

Your Name
Institution and Year
Relevant Titles/
Extracurriculars

Example of an Email:

Hello Professor Scanlon,

I hope you're having a lovely Tuesday. I'm writing to you this afternoon to ask if you could share with me the slides from class today. I looked on Moodle but have not been able to locate them. If they are on Moodle, could you please let me know what topic they're under? I appreciate your time,

Student Name
Illinois Wesleyan Class of 2023
Student Senate

When should you send an email?

Stick to the work week (Monday through Friday; typically, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) for emails. Don't flood someone's inbox right before the weekend, during the weekend, or on holidays. Also be aware of their away messages so you can understand when you're likely going to get a response.

For work:

- As a thank you after being interviewed for a job. It lets the potential employer know you have manners, an appreciation for the work they do, and allows you to get your name in front of them one more time.
- During business hours. Don't send emails late at night or in the early morning as it can be viewed as unprofessional. If you have to send an email during these times, use a delayed or schedule send feature so that your employer or employees won't get it until regular hours of operation.

For school:

- Any time you are confused by a topic discussed in class, you should check your notes and those of your professor. If you're still confused and cannot make your professor's office hours, you should email him, her, or them to set up an alternative time to meet. Don't flood their inbox with questions but rather focus on talking with them face to face for more clarity.
- During regular hours of operation. Most of my teachers and professors told us to not send emails after 9 p.m. or before 9 a.m. as that timeframe gave them the opportunity to work on their own needs (like grading and spending time with family). It's also a good idea to give professors at least 24 hours to respond during the week and 48 hours during the weekend. Be patient and recognize they're likely teaching many classes/ balancing many roles just as you are.
 - ProTip: Always remind your professor or teacher what class of theirs you're in. Some are teaching multiple sections of the same course, or have you in multiple courses, so letting them know the time is helpful, too, especially at the start of the semester/ year.

Questions?

You can always take an email to a Student Success or Writing Center tutor to get a second set of eyes.