

Email Etiquette

When we converse, we expect other people to observe certain rules of behavior. The same is true online. Here are a few pointers to help you communicate more effectively.

Clearly summarize the contents of your message in the subject line. Subject line should include ALA.

Properly titled messages help people organize and prioritize their [e-mail](#).

Don't use the CC (Carbon Copy) function to copy your message to everyone.

This is particularly true at work. These days everyone receives too many [e-mails](#). Unnecessary messages are annoying. If only a few people really need to receive your message, only direct it to them.

Similarly, when responding to e-mail, do not respond to all recipients. By choosing **Reply to All** or a similar button when responding to a message, you may end up broadcasting your response to your entire company.

Use BCCs (Blind Carbon Copies) when addressing a message that will go to a large group of people who don't necessarily know each other.

Just as it is not polite to give out a person's telephone number without his or her knowledge, it is not polite to give out someone's [e-mail address](#). For instance, when you send an e-mail message to 30 people and use **To** or **CC** to address the message, all 30 people see each other's e-mail address. By using **BCC**, each recipient sees only two-- theirs and yours.

Keep your messages short and focused.

Few people enjoy reading on their [computer screens](#); fewer still on the tiny screens in [cell phones](#), PDAs and other [mobile devices](#) that are becoming increasingly popular. Recipients tend to ignore these long messages.



Sending Attachments

Users of most [wireless devices](#) don't have the software required to open an attachment such as a Word document or spreadsheet.

Avoid using all capital letters except for emphasis.

USING ALL CAPS MAKES IT LOOK LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING! IT'S ALSO MORE DIFFICULT TO READ.

Don't write anything you wouldn't say in public.

Anyone can easily forward your message, even accidentally. This could leave you in an embarrassing position if you divulge personal or confidential information. If you don't want to potentially share something you write, consider using the telephone.



Use a smiley to make sure that a statement is not misunderstood.

Smileys are typically used in personal e-mail and are not considered appropriate for business. They should rarely be used in the office. If your message needs a smiley for better understanding, most likely you should not be delivering it via e-mail. Even with a smiley, someone may misunderstand you.

Smileys should be used to support a statement. It's rude to write something mean or derogatory, then place a happy smiley at the end of the sentence. Refer to the [Smiley article](#) for a list of commonly used ones.



Avoid sending e-mails to large numbers of people unless you have a serious reason to do it.

E-mail broadcast to many recipients may be considered [spam](#).

Nasty e-mails should also be avoided.

These messages have their own term: [flame](#). Flame e-mail is an insulting message designed to cause pain, as when someone "gets burned."

As a courtesy to your recipient, include your name at the bottom of the message.

The message contains your e-mail address (in the header), but the recipient may not know that the return address belongs to you, especially if it is different from your real name.



Check Your Spelling

To make sure your message isn't compromised by misspelled words, use your e-mail software's built-in spell checker.

For more tips, visit Emailreplies.com.