

Introduction

Email is the most widely used Internet application. Used wisely, it can greatly enhance communication with people near and far. Used unwisely, and it can create more problems than opportunities. The following tips used by online masters in communication will likely make any user's experience with email much more productive.

Tips

Message Length and Attachments

Keep the length of the message short

Shorter email messages are more likely to be completely read. If a longer message is necessary, consider attaching a file instead. One rule of thumb used by masters of public administration and others following good email etiquette is the Gettysburg Criterion, which holds that the body of an email should have fewer words than the Gettysburg Address.

Make sure the attachments can be read by the recipient

Attachments that are too large may be rejected by the recipient's system. Also, the format of the attachment should be one that the recipient can read. For example, you might need to convert a word processing file to a PDF file to make it easier for someone to open your document.

Keep unsolicited mail to a minimum

Think twice before sending a personal email to someone who does not expect it. If you must, try to send a message that the recipient would find useful.

Prevent unsolicited email

Use a clear and descriptive subject line

Typically, most email users see only the address of the sender and the subject line of incoming email. That subject line may be the difference between an email that is read and one that is discarded.

Use appropriate spelling and grammar

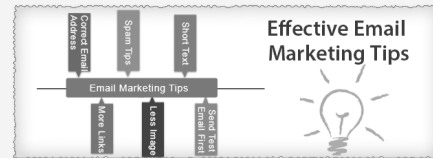
The alternative creates a negative impression of the writer or the writer's organization.

Basic style and grammar advice for email

Keep the number of recipients as low as practical

Emails with a long list of recipients in the To: or Cc: fields may not be seen as urgent as emails directly addressed to an individual. This is especially important when using email in the workplace.

Email



Tips continued

Respect the privacy of email addresses

When sending emails to multiple recipients, do not put in an email address in the To: or Cc: field if one or more recipients have no need to know that address. If you are sending an email to multiple recipients and you don't want the recipients to see any other address, then put the list of addresses in the Bcc: field. Review other advice for email privacy.

Assume that your email will be forwarded on to someone you do not know

Anyone who receives an email from you may forward that email to others, usually without your knowledge. If the contents of an email would cause you embarrassment if it fell into the wrong hands, consider not sending the email in the first place. Using email in the workplace

Make sure the recipient can identify you

When you are sending email to someone you don't know or don't know well, make sure that the recipient can figure out who you are, how you found out about the recipient, what you want from the recipient, and why that recipient should respond to your email. You should compose the subject line and the first sentence of the email so that these questions are answered. Otherwise, your email may be quickly deleted. Review Basic Email Style and Grammar Tips for more detailed advice on how to compose an email. Use plain text for the body of an email

While some email software allows recipients to view email formatted with HTML or other formatting codes, not every program has that option available, and if it is available it may not be activated by the recipient. On the other hand, a plain text email can be read by even the simplest of email programs.