

You've got (great) email!

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(Editor's note: These days, much of our communication takes place via email. At The Computing Center, our staff sees well over 1,000 emails each working day that are NOT deleted or quarantined by our spam filtration system. This is an excellent article regarding making your emails more compelling and read by those receiving them.)

Do your business emails get ignored, cause confusion, or get deleted before they're ever opened? If your emails aren't getting results, first be sure you aren't falling prey to these **bad email habits**. Then ask yourself honestly if you're making any of the following common email mistakes:

Instead of doing this:

Sending emails from unprofessional email addresses or unfamiliar usernames—If you're using a free email domain and/or a made-up email "handle," your emails risk being deleted. An email from cutekitty@hotmail.com is likely to be perceived as spam.

Do this:

Be professional—Save the free email domain for personal emails. For business, obtain your own company email domain and create email addresses incorporating your name and that domain (i.e., Sue.Smith@Smithandjones.com).

Instead of doing this:

Sending multiple emails on a single topic—When working on complex projects, it's often tempting to send an email every time a question or idea pops into your mind. This can overwhelm and annoy recipients.

Do this:

Be patient—As an alternative to sending a new email about a topic every time a thought occurs to you, jot them down during the day. Then combine your thoughts into one concise email.

Instead of doing this:

Repeating the same generic subject lines—"Request for Proposal" seems like a clear subject line, but if you send several RFP emails a week, using the same subject line for all of them can be confusing.

Do this:

Use specific subject lines—"Request for Proposal: Jones Advertising Campaign," "Request for Proposal: Juarez Foods Account," and "Request for Proposal: ABC Social Media Management" will keep everything straight.

Instead of doing this:

Creating overly long email chains—It can be helpful to include original emails in your replies, but if you end up with a chain of 35 emails in one reply, you're overdoing it.

Do this:

Know when to end it—If an email chain gets so unwieldy that printing it out uses more than a

few pieces of paper, things have gotten out of hand. Try starting new chains at different phases of the project, or shortening the chain by cutting and pasting key phrases rather than including the full text of every email in the chain.

Instead of doing this:

Using “reply all” unnecessarily—When recipients are bombarded with “reply all” emails, they’ll delete them without even reading them and may miss key information.

Do this:

“Reply all” with care—If someone is organizing a meeting, for instance, reply only to the organizer instead of the entire team. If you’re sending emails to a large group, add people who don’t need to reply in the “Cc” field.

Instead of doing this:

Sending vague emails—If your email lacks a call to action, recipients won’t feel urgency to open or act upon it. And if it’s missing key information, such as next steps or deadlines, recipients *can’t* act upon it.

Do this:

Request action and be specific—Your emails should include a call to action (“Need Your Input re: Smith RFP by 12/15”) and all the details recipients need to do what you’re requesting. Include action items and assign responsibility, list deliverables, and provide deadlines.

If all else fails

If you’re doing everything right with email but still aren’t getting the results you want, you may need to exit out of your email client and try the following:

- **Use text messaging** if the matter is urgent.
- **Pick up the phone.** You can often learn more in a conversation and resolve matters more quickly than in an email.
- **Meet for coffee.** If you’re within walking distance or a short drive of the other person, suggest discussing the issue over coffee. Nothing replaces face-to-face communication.

By improving your email writing skills, you’ll be better able to communicate, persuade, and get the desired results from customers, employees, and everyone else.