

Email etiquette

This article on [Email etiquette](#) will provide an insight into this important aspect of Soft Skill Training.

In today's business world email is by far the most often used form of communication. However, since email has emerged only recently as a result of the emergence of IT, rules of usage have not been enforced. This interferes with the efficacy of the communication.

The rules of email are known by the contemporary term Netiquette. They not only help in the effective use of email communication, but help to maintain a professional image, create efficiency and protect the company from law suits. Following the netiquette rules also proves that the sender is a competent and responsible person.



The Mechanics of Email

The mechanics of email provides a number of practical techniques that will enable the user to communicate effectively. Learning these techniques will help the person to communicate without being confusing and also how to correspond without offending recipients.

This article focuses on one of the most important mechanics of email - writing an effective subject line.

Subject Line

The subject line appears below the 'To' option on your screen. This is the only field that the recipient can read without opening the actual message. The subject line, in my opinion, is the most vital part of an email. First let us answer the question, "What is the purpose of a subject line?" An effective subject line allows the reader to see at a glance what the message is regarding. It serves as a gatekeeper and determines whether the message is read by the recipient.

A powerfully written message is useless if the subject line does not entice the reader who moves on without opening the message. A good subject line is bound to make the recipient inquisitive to the extent that he cannot resist the temptation to open and read the message immediately.

Here are some of the ways that people deal with subject lines:

- ❖ It is left blank.
- ❖ The message is so long that it runs beyond the size of the screen.
- ❖ It refers to the previous subject.

Questioning skills

- ❖ Grammar and capitalizations are inappropriate
- ❖ It is not truly indicative of the message.
- ❖ It sounds like hype.

When the subject line is handled in the above manner, the recipient will not bother to open the message as the authenticity of the sender is suspect. This also triggers the fear of email viruses which cautions him against opening the message. Of course this does not apply if the recipient knows you or is expecting a message from you, in such cases he/she will open the message even if there is no subject line. But, it is always better to avoid taking chances.

Subject lines are so important that if you leave the line blank many email programs will give a warning even before you can send the message. This warning usually comes in the form of a pop-up dialog box.

The example below shows one type of wording for a dialog box.

"The message has no subject. Select OK to send anyway."

Two Methods to Create Effective Subject Line:

- ❖ Write a subject line that is specific about the message.
- ❖ Write a subject line that is creative.



Writing a subject line that is specific about the message

This method is used when you are writing to someone you know or with someone who is expecting your message. When you are specific in your subject line the reader will be impelled to open and read.

Below are listed some of the ways to writing an effective subject line that is specific:

- ❖ The words 'Hi' or "Greetings" in the subject line signify nothing to the recipient in professional correspondences. Therefore, it is important to use only relevant subject lines.
- ❖ The abbreviation "RE:" for regarding is acceptable in email just as in typing memos.
- ❖ Think of your subject line to be the main headline of your document. Instead of simply writing "Meeting", be a little more descriptive and say "July 30th Process Team Meeting".
- ❖ A descriptive subject line enables the reader to file and retrieve your message later.
- ❖ It also allows easy scanning for message content in mail boxes.

Questioning skills

Here are examples to show how to write detailed and specific subject lines.

Instead of	Use
I have a question	Question about Kumar file
Meeting Question	Quality Assurance Mtg.
Proposal	Communication Training Proposal
Response	Response to Sales Proposal

Writing a subject line that is creative:

This method is used when you are writing to recipients that you are not familiar with. Hence you have to be creative in order to improve the chances of your email being read. The subject line has to be worded in such a way that it will convince the recipient to open the message and read it without deleting it. However, the information provided in the subject line will differ depending on the recipient and the situation. Here are a few examples.

Email Subject Lines

Uses for the Subject Line	Sample Wordings
Identify who you are	Engineer
Tell more about yourself	Computer Software Engineer
Tell why you are contacting this person	Network problem
Find things that make you unique	Java Programmer
Find common space with recipient	Fellow IIT graduate & Engineer

Capitalization in Subject Line

As a rule, do not use all upper case characters when writing emails. The recipient feels that you are "shouting" or aggressively conveying a message. Shouting will not make the recipient open your message.

Questioning skills

However, if you wish to capitalize, be consistent. You may choose to capitalize only the first word, or you may decide to capitalize every word. Here is an example: 'Question regarding Kumar's file'.

Length of a Subject Line

It is always best to limit the subject line to around 25 to 35 characters. Here, character means a letter, space or punctuation. Condense the subject line using only pertinent words without compromising comprehension. Here is an example: "I have a question regarding the Kumar File", can be written as "Question regarding Kumar File".

Using the right email etiquette is very critical in today's business communication. MMM Training Solutions conducts a one day seminar on Communication Skills that extensively trains you on net etiquette.

- ❖ List out typical situations at home or work in which you encounter negative emotions like sadness, fear, anger or frustration. For instance, you may feel angry when your child spills coffee onto your clothes on the morning of an important meeting. Or you may feel frustrated when your efforts at work are not being recognized. Perhaps you feel sad when you think that you need to work over-time on your spouse's birthday. By identifying the situations that produce negative emotions, you will realize what triggers it. This is an important step towards dealing with emotions and keeping negativity at bay. When you are stressed - What is it that stresses you out? The answer to this question will help you to achieving the first step in busting stress
- ❖ Recognize and name the emotions you feel at the various instances of your daily life. Positive emotions also need to be considered - such as spending time with friends, listening to good music, or spending time with a loved one. Note them down in a diary and explain how you felt in each of these positive/negative triggering instances.
- ❖ Make a note of whether the emotions you experienced are classified under low energy or high energy emotions. By doing a daily recall of events, interactions and activities, the next step would be to write down how long you stayed in that particular emotion. The best way would be to chart out this step in the form of a daily chart.

As you develop your EI skills, you will notice how you remain lesser in the negative energy zone and move towards the productive zone of positive energy. This method is a very useful technique especially for those of you who find it difficult to recognize your emotions.

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you who find it difficult to recognize your emotions.

Consistent use of this method will help bring in a systematic improvement through the recognition of positive and negative emotions, as it increases your self-awareness - an important factor to bringing emotional intelligence into your daily life.

Source:

<http://jobfunctions.bnet.com/abstract.aspx?tag=content%3Bcol1&docid=387245&promo=100511>

<http://www.articlesnatch.com/Article/Emotional-Intelligence---Emotional-Self-awareness---The-First-Step/434847#ixzz0j8m1uGrj>

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Pramila Mathew specializes in Management Coaching and Leadership Development. With over 25 years of experience in the global workspace, she is one of the few Training Consultants with a background in business and psychology. She heads MMM Training Solutions, a soft skills training consultancy that focuses on training and development and business coaching as the catalyst of enhancing performance management.

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