



Tech Coach Corner – Email Etiquette

by LTCL Tech Coach, Jeff Lazar

Email lies midway between a full letter (business or personal) and a text message (known as SMS for short messaging service in much of the world). I don't claim to be the Emily Post or Miss Manners of email, but I'll share some ideas and pet peeves. The other tech coaches likely can share others. I'll divide mine into categories – as you'll see below. Fasten your seat belt, and let's go.

General Tips

- Courteous greeting and closing
- Appropriate level of formality
- No misspellings – especially names
- Include **all** the relevant information – email ping-pong is frustrating
- Proper sentence structure and grammar
- If emotional, put it in your save folder for 24 hours and then review it
- Always spell check (and grammar check if you have the means)
- Subject field should reflect the content
- Brief and to the point – long conversations should be reserved for either an old fashioned letter or telephone

Formatting

- All caps is the same as yelling
- All lower case and/or bad grammar suggests lack of education or laziness
- Reserve bolding for key words
- No patterned backgrounds – makes things much harder to read
- Plain fonts
- Use emoticons sparingly
- Avoid multiple font colors – especially on a phone they make reading difficult

Attachments

- Large attachments might not make it out of your service
- Large attachments might not make it past the recipients' services
- Zipped attachments might not be able to be opened by the recipients
- Learn how to resample (downsample) or resize graphics
- **Never, never, never** open an attachment from someone you don't know
- Make sure your virus, adware, spyware programs are up to date and include scanning of your emails and attachments (both incoming and outgoing)
- PDF (portable document format) is the preferred way to send attachments

To, From, CC, BCC, RR, Subject

- To is for those from whom you want a response
- Use CC sparingly – only when it is important or as an FYI
- Avoid using RR (return receipt requested) except when it is essential
- BCC (blind copy) is gossip – talking behind someone's back
- Never reveal a friend's or contact's email address to a stranger; that's a good place for BCC
- Always include a brief subject – it should relate to the content of the message

Forwarding

- Don't forward emails that say to do something or contribute to something – many are hoaxes and your friends don't need to see them
- If someone asks you not to forward emails, don't take it personally
- If you are forwarding something, explain why
- Don't forward anything without removing other email addresses, comments, etc.
- When forwarding to more than one person, put your email address in the TO field, and all the others in the BCC field to protect their email address from being published. This is a significant privacy issue.
- Don't hesitate to remind a friend/contact about these forwarding suggestions

Business Email

- One major rule: treat business email as if it were a formal letter on your letterhead
- Formality is always appropriate
- Review all the basic courtesy suggestions, above

Other Considerations

- Before you get upset at no response, check your junk/trash/spam folder
- Take a few moments to review all emails before you hit send
- Don't use an old email to hit reply and start an entirely new topic

- Learn how to use snopes.com or other fact-checking websites before you forward emails with references to sites you don't know
- Don't send mass emails to people who didn't ask to be on your mass mailing list
- And don't forget, type unto others as you would have them type unto you

If you have any specific questions about this, please feel free to contact LTCL Tech Coaches at techcoach@laketravislibrary.org and one of our coaches will respond.