

## **The ABCs of Email Etiquette**

Following the ABCs of email etiquette will keep a teacher's email communication professional and within Board policy guidelines of educational and administrative use.

**A**sk. Since time is valuable to every teacher, before you dash off an email to multiple persons, follow this chain:

1. Ask a veteran peer.
2. Ask your Department Head or Unit Leader.
3. Ask your assistant principal.
4. Ask your building principal.
5. Ask a District Office administrator.

**B**usiness. Our email system is for educational and administrative use only. Do not conduct personal business via email. Do not sell tickets, ask for recommendations for a great restaurant, collect funds for a charity, etc.

**C**lear communication. Be succinct and to the point. If you need action or a response, ask for it. If you need to meet with someone, ask for a meeting. Upon receiving email asking you for action or a response, reply with a clear yes/no.

**D**efault settings. Use these instead of fonts, type sizes and colors that make messages difficult to read. If your email is to the "outside world," some email programs cannot read fancy fonts or unusual colors.

**E**xcessive punctuation. Multiple exclamation points or question marks should be avoided. Let your text speak for itself.

**F**laming. Sending an angry email is always unacceptable. Reread every email you write before you send it, to make certain it does not exacerbate the situation. Engage in face-to-face communication to express frustration or resolve issues.

**G**rammar. It counts. Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation in your emails. Always proofread and spell-check.

**H**umor. Use with caution in email. Humor, sarcasm, or irony can be easily misinterpreted in an email, because tone of voice is lost.

**I**nclude subject line. Choose a subject that is clear and strong. It alerts the recipient to your topic and sets the tone for your message.

**J**udgment. Use it when forwarding emails. Not every message brings benefits from being forwarded.

**K**eeP cc'ing to a minimum. Multiple persons do not need to know your message. If a problem develops, others will be brought into the discussion as needed. Don't include them from the start.

**L**owest level resolution. Problem solve through the chain of command. It is not appropriate to email the Superintendent or other District personnel without first addressing the issue with your immediate supervisor.

**M**ind your manners. Make requests politely. Use "please" and "thank you." Just because you can't see the person you're addressing doesn't mean the rules of etiquette don't apply.

**N**ever send anything via email that you would not want made public. No email is completely private. Even if you "delete" a message, a computer expert probably can retrieve it. Your job may depend upon following this guideline.

**O**pening an unexpected attachment. Don't endanger your job by opening an attachment you question.

**P**ublicizing others' email addresses without permission. This is an invasion of their privacy. When forwarding an email to more than one recipient, address the email to yourself and blind carbon copy (bcc) everyone else. The addresses entered as "bcc" won't appear on the delivered email.

**Q**uick! Get to the point. When composing an email, use the triangle form of writing. Place the most important information in the first paragraph. Add details in the paragraphs that follow.

**R**esponse. If you need a response to an issue or question by the end of the day, don't send email. It may not be read until too late to meet your need. Find the person instead and talk face-to-face.

**S**eek permission before forwarding emails. An email is written with the specific recipient in mind. The sender may not wish others to read it. If you do gain permission to forward an email, include a short explanatory note as to why it's being forwarded.

**T**ime. It matters. Reply to email within 24 hours if at all possible.

**U**pper case. Use of upper case letters means you're shouting. Use upper case words only when the emphasis is needed to make your point.

**V**ery large files overload the email system. Don't be party to crashing the system. Delete any personal files. Board policy allows educational and administrative use only.

**W**arnings and security issues. Expect well-written emails with specific direction for staff when crisis situations arise.

**eX**traneous information. Don't force recipients to scroll through numerous lines of irrelevant information, characters, email addresses, subject lines, and repetitious text to find the "meat" of your message. When forwarding emails, delete all unnecessary text and graphics.

**Y**our tone. Be conscious of who your recipient is. Email is not an informal means of communication, even though many of us think of it that way. While an informal tone may be fine when emailing a colleague, use a more formal tone when emailing your supervisor.

**Z**ip your lip. Our email is for professional correspondence. It is a public forum which could be made public upon request. Treat colleagues, students, parents, and supervisors as you wish to be treated. Refrain from gossip, complaints, and speculation. Avoid offensive language of any kind. Using email to harass others in a sexual, racial or other manner violates civil rights laws. Approach everyone by expecting the best.

Remember . . . these **ABCs of Email Etiquette** apply when using email internally and when sending email outside our system.

Responding to an email from an angry parent . . .

- Refrain from immediate response other than to say, "I received your email and will respond soon."
- Seek assistance from an administrator.
- Think three times about your response: before you write, after you write, and before you send your message.

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