

Email is a common form of communication used at universities and in the workplace. Emails are often a more formal genre, particularly if your recipient is a professor, employer, coworker, or colleague. This handout covers general email concepts. However, always write with your audience and assignment in mind.

Audience and Tone

Identifying and writing to a **specific audience will determine the formality of your tone, the level of detail, and the content of your email.** When assessing your audience, consider the following questions:

- Who is the recipient of this email? Are they an authority figure, coworker, close friend, etc.?
- Is the topic or purpose of your email important or relevant to your audience?
- Is the content of your email controversial, emotional, complex, or better addressed in person?
- What tone (formal or informal) is appropriate for your audience?
- Is your word choice clear and written with the recipient in mind?
- Will your reader share the same level of importance and urgency as expressed in your email?
- Have you given your recipient enough time to respond to your email within a reasonable time frame and during established business hours?

Email Content

Subject Line

The subject line **identifies the purpose of the email and sets the tone** for the entire message. This line should include a **keyword or phrase** that introduces **the topic of the email.** For example, when emailing a professor about a potential deadline extension for a midterm exam, *Midterm Extension* might be the subject line. Words in subject lines are capitalized.

Opening

The opening of an email is similar to the opening of a written letter. Typically, start by **formally addressing the recipient.** The opening will be different depending on your relationship with the recipient and the number of recipients. When possible, address the recipient by name and use the appropriate title.

Example: Dear Professor Jones,

Example: Dear Program Selection Committee:

Example: Good morning, sales team.

Message

The body of your email should be **brief and direct** and written with a **clear purpose or request.** When composing an email message, consider the following:

- Introduce yourself and your relationship to the recipient(s).
- **State your purpose** for writing within the first two lines of the message.
- **Keep your email focused,** and avoid having too many topics per email.
- Include any **context, reasons, or explanations needed to understand your purpose.**
- End by **stating your desired outcome,** whether a response, specific action, etc.

Closing

In closing your email, always **state your name**, and depending on the purpose of the message, add your position, company name, or additional contact information. Consider adding a **friendly closing** such as:

Example: Thank you,

Example: Sincerely,

Example: Best Wishes,

Replies

When replying to an email, remember that there are two options: **Reply**, which will reply only to the sender, and **Reply All**, which will reply to the sender and any other recipients included on the original email.

Attachments & Links

Emails are useful for **sending files**, including documents, pictures, and other media files. You can attach files or link directly to them. Your email service may limit file size, so it is best to attach smaller files. **Clearly name your files** and add a note in your message directing your recipient to any links or attachments. If needed, introduce the file and its purpose.

Email Tips

- Limit your message to a **few succinct paragraphs**.
- **Bullet points** may help organize and prioritize important information.
- **Always proofread** your message before sending. Reading aloud with your audience in mind may help you identify errors, ensure clarity, and refine tone.
- When writing a formal email, **avoid exclamation marks or emojis**.
- **Do not expect an instant response** to your emails.
- Double-check you are emailing the **correct recipient(s)** by verifying their email address(es).

Sample Email

To	professor@uvu.edu	Bcc
Cc		

Question About Semester Research Paper

Draft saved at 11:50 AM

Hello Professor Sanchez,

I'm Alex Lee, a student in your Tuesday/Thursday, 9:00a.m. capstone class.

I've been struggling to find credible sources for my semester research paper. I was wondering if I could schedule a time to meet with you to discuss how to find more sources. I have a different class during your scheduled office hours, but I'm available after our class between 11:00a.m. and 3:00p.m.

Please let me know if a meeting during that time would work for you.

Alex Lee