

UTS:HELPS

HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE AND PRESENTATION SUPPORT

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Email is one of the most common forms of communication. How you compose an email can reveal a lot about you – your professionalism, your communication skills, your personal image, and your attention to detail.

There are three styles of email:

- informal, e.g. emails between friends
- standard, e.g. emails between you and your lecturer/colleague
- formal, e.g. as one part of your job application

This fact sheet will focus on the standard and formal styles of email.

Standard style

1. Email address

Use a professional email address which includes your first name and last name so that the recipient knows who you are. Please note that you are expected to use your UTS email account when communicating with your lecturers and other UTS staff members. All UTS official correspondence will be delivered to your UTS email address.

Example:

- cheekymonkey@gmail.com
- party.animal@hotmail.com
- xiaoming.yang@student.uts.edu.au
- patrick.wilson@gmail.com

2. Subject line

What you choose to put in the subject line should give the recipient a good idea of the email content. Keep it brief and be specific.

- Subject: queries
- Subject: hello!!!
- Subject: questions on Professional Identity Task 1
- Subject: request for extension – Professional Identity Task 1

3. Greeting

It is basic courtesy to address the recipient at the start of an email. Do not go straight into the email content, like you do when composing an informal email to a friend.

- Dear Dr Jayakumar,
- Hi, Jackie.

4. Language

Keep your writing simple, clear and direct to avoid the risk of ambiguity. Sentences are short (but complete), and the use of contractions (e.g. *I've* for *I have*, etc.) is fine. However, never use SMS language like you do in a text message (e.g. *u* for *you*; *r* for *are*, etc.).

Thanx. Its good 2 know that u will b showing us a sample assn tmw

Thank you. It's good to know that you will be showing us a sample assignment tomorrow.

Make the email content as reader-friendly as possible. Do not write everything in one long paragraph. Avoid long sentences, and organise your ideas into paragraphs and/or bullets with a blank line between paragraphs.

5. Confidentiality

There is no such thing as a completely private and confidential email. Always assume that your email could be read by anyone other than the intended recipient. It could be forwarded by the recipient to other people; and when the recipient replies to your email (with your original message), it could be cc'd and/or bcc'd to others. All emails can be retrieved and read, and are archived by the service provider, even after they have been deleted by you or the recipient. Be careful with what you say in an email. Don't include anything that you might regret later, especially if it's written in anger, as it might come back to haunt you.

6. Closing

As with greeting the recipient at the start, you should sign off at the end of an email with a set phrase such as 'Kind regards' and followed by your name. Sign off with the name that the recipient knows you by so they know exactly who you are. For instance, if your lecturer knows you as *Xiaoming* but you sign off as *Jamie*, the lecturer wouldn't have a clue who the sender is.

7. Proofread

Check the email before clicking on the *Send* button:

- Am I sending this email to the right person?
- Is the email address of the recipient correct?
- Have I written something appropriate in the subject line?
- Have I greeted the recipient?
- Have I spelled the recipient's name correctly?
- Have I organised my email contents in clearly divided short paragraphs and/or bullets, using clear, simple and direct language?
- Spelling errors? Appropriate punctuation? Accurate information?
- Have I signed off the email?

Formal style

The formal style is not common in emails, but you might need to compose a formal email when applying for a job, or writing to an authority or organisation in a work context.

All of the above-mentioned tips for standard emails can also be applied to a formal email, except that the language should be a lot more formal, and ideas need to be expressed politely and carefully.

Greet the recipient using their title and last name (e.g. Dear Mr Pitt; Mrs Brown; Dr Dolittle) at the start. Conventional titles used are *Mr*, *Ms*, *Mrs* and *Miss*. When addressing a female, it is advisable to determine how she prefers to be addressed. *Mrs* is used to address a married female who has taken on her husband's last name, while *Miss* is used to address a single female. If it's not possible to ascertain the preference, use *Ms*. *Ms* is commonly used these days as it does not disclose one's marital status.

If you don't know the name of the recipient, you should endeavour to find that out; you could do a search online, or simply call the organisation for the information.

To help you write effective emails for work, study or other purposes, consult the following:

Emmerson, P. 2004, *Email English*, Macmillan Publishers Limited, Oxford.

Bad example of a formal email

This email address does not sound very professional in a formal context.

The sender will need to be more precise here to help the recipient decide on her action.

The recipient is not addressed; the email is too brief, informal and unclear; and the email is not signed off by the sender.

From: dizzie.queen@gmail.com
 To: sofia.wang@bigcompany.com.au
 Cc:
 Subject: application

Hi. I came across your job ad in uni and I would like to apply for it. CV attached. Cheers.

Improved version of the above email

This email address contains the first name and last name of the sender, even though it's a private email address.

The phrase here clearly tells the recipient what the email is about. Including your name here will help the recruiter find your info later.

The recipient is addressed appropriately; the email is structured with short paragraphs and in clear, simple language; and the email is signed off by the sender.

From: tom.sawyer@gmail.com
 To: sofia.wang@bigcompany.com.au
 Cc:
 Subject: Application for sales executive position – Tom Sawyer

Dear Ms Wang,

Re. Advertising sales executive position (Job ref. no. 4261)

As per my detailed resume, I have more than one year's experience in sales and account management, and excellent communication skills developed in retail. While in the corporate sector, I have demonstrated that I can work well independently as well as in a team environment.

Please also find attached a full covering letter where I explain the extent to which, from my research into your company, this opportunity matches my aspirations to learn and to contribute.

I would be delighted to discuss this application with you at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,
 Tom Sawyer
 0400 123 456

