



How to E-mail Your Professor

On the first day of class, many professors will tell you their preferred method of communication outside of class is e-mail. The ability to communicate your ideas and questions effectively through e-mail is a valuable skill to develop. Use the following tips to help you develop *quality* e-mails.

Address yourself well.

Write from an academic account (.edu) or develop a professional e-mail address on a free site. You are in college now, so drop the crazy e-mail names. Your professor shouldn't be receiving e-mail from Stud_muffin@yahoo.com or rowdygirl2000@gmail.com. A simple address at a site like Gmail or Yahoo that is composed of a variation on your full name is a good way to present yourself.

Check your class resources first.

Before sending your e-mail, be sure you don't already have the information you need. Did you check your *syllabus*? Did you check your *professor's website* or *TalonNet*? You might already have what you need; if you do, asking for it again will make you seem lazy or unfocused.

Use the subject line.

The subject line of the e-mail should be informative. Most professors receive a lot of e-mail and are looking to delete spam as quickly as possible. **Do not leave the subject line blank.** If you have nothing in the subject line, your e-mail may be tossed out with the other trash. The best subject lines will, in a few words, state the purpose of your message. "Question about Essay #3 for English 52" or "Need to meet during office hours."

Greet the professor politely by name and title.

"Dear Professor Jackson" is probably too formal. Try "Hello Professor Jackson" or "Hi Dr. Jackson." Never greet your professor with "Hey," and avoid using the last name without a title. "Hey Jackson" is **not** a good way to start, and never address your professor by his or her first name unless you have been explicitly invited to do so.



Briefly and politely explain why you are e-mailing.

Think about your audience. ***What does your professor need to know to respond to your question or concern?*** Be sure you are asking a question. “I don’t get it” is a statement, not a question, and it isn’t clear or specific. Also, don’t ask your professor to review an entire lecture. If you have a more involved question, you should make arrangements to speak with your professor in person during office hours.

Choose a professional tone and style.

Remember this is a ***professional correspondence***, not a text message to a friend. You need to correctly spell out all of the words. Avoid text lingo like “lol,” “r,” or “u.” Your writing should be grammatically correct and well structured—so ***proofread*** your e-mail before you send it out. Avoid emoticons, exclamation points, and fancy stationary. It’s cheesy and unprofessional.

Allow time for a response.

Your professor is not sitting by the computer, eagerly awaiting your e-mail. During the week, you should wait *at least* 24 hours for a response, often longer. If you e-mail over the weekend, you may not get a response until Monday. If you have not heard anything within five days, you can resend your message. The rule here is to ***not procrastinate*** and expect an instant response prior to a due date or deadline.

Do not use e-mail to vent, rant, or whine.

You may very well be frustrated about a situation, but ***e-mail is not the place to deal with it***. If you find yourself writing an angry e-mail, don’t send it. Remember that what you write and send becomes public, and you never know who will end up reading it. A better option will be to speak with your professor ***in person***. If you need to write about a sensitive issue, it is a good idea to have someone else read over the e-mail before you send it.

Don’t be insulting, or worse, clueless.

If you have missed class, do not send your professor an e-mail asking if you missed anything. Of course you missed things, and if you miss class too often, this behavior will impact your grade. If you must miss class, make arrangements to get together with a classmate to catch up.

Who are you?

Be sure to ***sign your e-mail***. Use your first and last name, and if you are already enrolled in the professor’s class, include the name and time of the class below your name.

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