

Email Etiquette

When you send an email, there is a chance that it will live forever—a sobering thought. Therefore, it is wise to adopt courteous habits that convey a professional image.

1. **Remember that email is not private.** Email created using OHSU's email systems is considered OHSU property and can be retrieved, examined and used in a court of law. Never put anything in an email message that you wouldn't put on a postcard. Remember that email can be forwarded, so unintended audiences may see what you've written. You might also inadvertently send something to the wrong party, so always keep the content professional to avoid embarrassment or worse.
2. **Use blind copy (BC) and carbon copy (CC) appropriately.** Try not to use BC to keep others from seeing who you copied; it shows confidence when you directly CC anyone receiving a copy. Do use BC, however, when sending to a large distribution list, so recipients won't have to see a huge list of names. Be cautious with your use of CC; overuse simply clutters inboxes. Copy only people who are directly involved.
3. **Make the subject line meaningful.** Use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself.
4. **Keep messages brief and to the point.** Reading email messages is harder on the eyes than reading printed communications. Get to the point as quickly as possible.
5. **Remember that your tone cannot be heard in an email.** Email cannot convey the nuances of verbal communication. In an attempt to convey emotions, some people use emoticons, such as a smiley face 😊 but use them sparingly. You do not want to appear unprofessional. Also, do not assume that using a smiley emoticon will diffuse a difficult message.
6. **Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation.** After you compose message, use the spell checker to check your spelling. Then proofread the message for grammar. You would be amazed at how many people focus on your misspelled words rather than your message. Double-check common word usage errors (there, they're, and their; to and too; except and accept).
7. **Avoid Flaming.** Flaming is the act of telling somebody off using an email, and it should NEVER be done. If you have a gripe with someone, contact them over the phone or face-to-face, but never through an email.
8. **Do not write in ALL CAPS.** IF YOU WRITE IN ALL CAPS, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response.

9. **Use a signature that includes contact information.** To ensure that people know who you are, include a signature that has your contact information, including your mailing address, website, and phone numbers. Be sure to spell out “Oregon Health & Science University”, rather than just “OHSU”. More information: <http://ozone.ohsu.edu/branding/templates.shtml#email>

Edmond E. Edmondson, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate director of undisclosed services

emondso@ohsu.edu
503-494-XYZX

Oregon Health & Science University
Mail code: Z999
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park road
Portland, Oregon 97239-3098



- Some people like to add a quote to their signature. This can add a little personality if done carefully. Keep it short and avoid quotes that might offend people on the grounds of religion, race, politics, or sexuality.
10. **Identify your attachments.** Do not assume everyone is using the same software you use, especially when sending email to recipients external to OHSU. Include the application name and version in your message: “I have attached an Excel 2007 workbook containing the numbers you requested...”
11. **Do not send or forward the following:**
- a. Emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist, sexist, or obscene remarks.
 - b. Virus hoaxes and warnings. Delete any you receive from others. Contact the Help Desk (503-494-2222) if you are unsure whether the email is a virus hoax or warning.
 - c. Chain letters.
12. **Do not overuse ‘Reply to All’.** Only use Reply to All if you need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.
13. **Do not use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact.** Don’t forget the value of face-to-face and telephone communication. Email communication isn’t appropriate when sending confusing or emotional messages. If you have a problem with someone, speak with that person directly. Don’t use email to avoid an uncomfortable situation or to cover up a mistake.
14. **And finally...** Follow the email policies found in OHSU’s Acceptable Use of Computing Resources policy (http://ozone.ohsu.edu/policy/pac/chapt_11/11-20-010.htm).