



Stony Brook  
University

# THE OMBUDS OFFICE

*We're here to listen with an open mind.  
We're here to help resolve problems fairly.*

stonybrook.edu/ombuds • (631) 632-9200

*Confidential      Impartial      Informal      Independent*

## USING EMAIL ETIQUETTE

**First and foremost ask yourself, is it necessary to communicate via email?** Would it serve me better to communicate in person? Have I thought about the various advantages and disadvantages of different types of communication – email, texting, written letter, in person, Skype or FaceTime, etc.?

**Always use a subject line.** Be sure to briefly and accurately write the purpose of your email in the subject line. This may help you receive a quicker response.

**Use proper titles.** Formally address others by their title unless given permission to do otherwise, such as Dr. X, Professor X, Dean X or Mr./Ms./Mrs., etc.

**Identify yourself early in the email correspondence.** If you are using your personal email account, it may not have your full name. So, it's important to identify yourself and give alternate ways to contact you such as a cell phone number or home number.

**Do not use ALL capital letters to emphasize or highlight your message.** This is considered to be rude, and can be interpreted as shouting at someone in terms of email etiquette.

**Use diplomatic language.** Write the email when you have time to think and carefully choose your words. Use positive statements. Keep negative ones to a minimum. Only write words that you would have also shared in person.

**Write the email when you are calm.** If you are experiencing any strong negative emotions or negative thoughts about the situation and/or the other person, wait until you cool down. It may be useful to seek out someone whom you trust or a confidential office that can listen to your concerns. You don't want to have any regrets. If necessary, write the email, but be sure to save it in **draft**. When you revisit it you're more likely to edit out the emotional content and stick to the facts.





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**Be clear, focused and succinct.** It's important to get to the point right at the beginning of your email. People often receive countless emails. The ones that seem long could be skipped over for review later on or read too quickly causing miscommunication or conflict. You don't want your email to be overlooked or responded to at a later date, because it was so lengthy. Rather than writing a long email, put the information in a Word document and refer to it as an attachment in your email message.

**Write anything in an email that you would say in person.** Sometimes people will risk saying things in an email that they are reluctant to share in person. There should be no difference if you're honestly communicating what you feel is important.

**Use one topic per email.** Make your request in the introduction. Leave details for the middle section of your email. In closing, briefly summarize your request. Do not overload the email with attachments.

**Allow time for a response.** Be patient and give a reasonable amount of time for a reply. If your issue is time sensitive, indicate such in the subject line and be sure to kindly request a reply by a certain date.

**Organize your email message.** Be sure the first sentence or paragraph clearly outlines your message and desired outcome or expectations. If you have a few key points, number them or use bullets. It helps the reader quickly scan and understand your message. Always list the most important points first.

**Proofread.** Check spelling and grammar. Use spellcheck. Remember that some words may be spelled correctly, but their use may be out of context to your subject matter. So, spellcheck isn't always a sure thing. It's important for you to personally re-read your email for errors in context too.

**Respect confidentiality.** Do not put confidential information in an email. If possible, be general and state that you would like to discuss the matter either by the phone or in person.





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**Communicate in a professional manner. Do not use slang, jargon, emoticons or abbreviations** such as LOL (Laugh out Loud). Use them for informal communication with people you know well such as friends, classmates, coworkers or family. Use a professional font. It's not necessary to use large fonts or to use bold, italics, underline or multiple text colors, etc. to emphasize your point. Emoticons or Emoji are often viewed as unprofessional and childish even though they do convey tone.

**To BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) or CC (Carbon Copy)?** There's hardly ever a good time to use BCC except when updating people on something like a change of address or when communicating to large groups content that is informal. Use CC when you wish to keep people in the loop with no need for them to reply.

**Be respectful and courteous.** Imagine that you're receiving this email. Are the tone and language professional? Use a positive tone. Tone means the emotion and attitude you want to convey. Finally, ending your email with the words such as *sincerely, thank you, or looking forward to your reply* is always appreciated.

**Review your email.** Are you sure that you want to send it? Is the person addressed the correct person to receive the email and/or should it be sent to someone else? Once you hit send, it is official.

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