

The 23 Most Important Rules Of E-mail Etiquette

More than 80 years have passed since Emily Post wrote her first book on etiquette. Back then, the rules had more to do with how to properly introduce someone and which fork to use at a dinner party. But with the introduction of new communication tools comes new rules of engagement. Here are 23 quick tips and rules for what is—and isn't—acceptable behavior when using e-mail.

1. Be concise and to the point. Read your e-mail to make sure it makes sense before sending to avoid e-mail “ping-pong.”
2. Don't reply just to say “got it” unless the recipient has asked you to.
3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation. This is still a communication and a representation of YOU. Sloppy spelling and punctuation looks unprofessional.
4. Don't use e-mail to deliver bad or personal news. If you need to discuss a serious matter with someone, only use e-mail to request a face to face meeting or phone call, not to deliver the news.
5. Do not attach unnecessary files, especially large ones. Sending big files can cause someone's e-mail system to clog, shut down or crash. Instead, use www.yousendit.com for large documents.
6. Do not overuse the high priority option. Use it only when something is truly critical and time sensitive.
7. Do not write in CAPITALS—it's the equivalent of shouting.
8. Don't leave out the message thread.
9. Give your recipients an easy way to opt-out or remove themselves from your list.
10. Do not overuse “Reply to All.” If you have a message for the sender that is not relevant to everyone else, make sure you only send it to that person.
11. Do not cc everyone when sending a broadcast to multiple people. Instead, use the bcc (blind carbon copy) to keep everyone's e-mail private.
12. Don't overuse abbreviations and emoticons.
13. Don't use neon colors, hard to read fancy fonts and background images. They make it difficult—if not impossible—to read your message.
14. Only use rich text and HTML messages when you are certain the recipient can receive that type of message. Many people can only open text messages, and most rich text and HTML messages don't convert well.
15. Do not forward chain letters, ever.
16. Do not request delivery and read receipts.
17. Do not recall messages.
18. Do not forward a message that was sent to you without permission from the original sender.
19. Do not use email to discuss confidential information. A good rule of thumb is this: if you don't want the entire world to see it, then don't put it in an e-mail.
20. Use a meaningful subject line to help the recipient sort through their inbox.
21. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. They aren't funny and if sent using company e-mail, they could get you sued or fired.
22. Keep your anti-virus up-to-date to make sure you don't spread viruses to your friends.
23. Don't reply to spam; it only signifies that your address is active to the spammer and will invite more of the same.