How to Write An Email

When you enter your career, you will be expected to communicate with employers and co-workers effectively and with a level of professionalism. This level of professionalism should extend to instructors/professors on college campuses as well. A frequent complaint of professors throughout American universities is that students’ emails lack the level of professionalism that should be central to academic communications. Hence, below is a list of suggestions that you should consider in order to make your emails more effective.

1. **Make sure that your Email has a subject that reflects the reason for the email.** People receive many emails that are SPAM or that are not important. There are also emails that are dangerous (containing viruses). Professors must decide if each email is something that they want to open. You want to give your professor a sense of the content of the document so that they will understand its significance. Many people (including me) hesitate when they receive an email that does not contain a subject line.

2. **Make sure to greet the person that you are addressing.** While greetings such as “Dear Mr. Jones,” are a bit old fashioned (but still acceptable), some form of greeting should be included. For example, “Greetings Mr. Jones” or “Hi Dr. Thomas.” When your email does not have a greeting it is the rude equivalent of “Hey You Listen to Me.”

3. **Make sure that you have an appropriate closer.** This is not essential, but it is a nice touch. You do not have to use “Sincerely” as a closer. There are many other closers that you may choose from that fit different situations including “Thanks,” “Best wishes,” “Cordially,” etc.

4. **Use Proper grammar and spelling within your email.** Everyone makes mistakes; however, you should attempt to minimize the grammar and spelling errors in your emails to your professors. One way to minimize errors is to type your email first in a word processing program (MS Word or MS Works). Email should not resemble instant messages or text messages. There should be no text slang included in emails to professors.

5. **Watch your tone in your email.** Writing an email is different from speaking to someone in person. At times, the words that you choose and the sentence construction that you use can give the recipient a different impression of your attitude or meaning than you intend. Be careful with this!

6. **Be sure to add a signature (your name) to your email.** Your professors teach multiple courses and have many other responsibilities. They should not have to play the guessing game. It is not their responsibility to try to figure out who you are. Your first and last name should conclude every email. This is true even if you are sending your email from within the university or campus email system. Though your name may show up automatically in the system, you should still sign you email.

7. **REMEMBER that your email represents YOU!** When your email contains multiple spelling and grammar errors, no greeting, no signature or inappropriate tone, it gives your professor the impression that you do not care enough about the course or have enough respect for the professor to effectively communicate with him or her. When I receive emails such as these, their priority is lowered. My response to such emails may be delayed due to this.