

TECH TIPS

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Improve Your Use of Email

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We've all gotten used to sending and replying to emails. Here are a few simple guidelines that can make your emails more effective and easier to find should you need to find them again.

And using email "etiquette" will make sending and receiving emails and messages more pleasant for everyone.

Wisely use the Subject field of your email

If you don't include a subject line with your email, it can be missed or ignored by the recipient because they don't know what it's about – unless they were just talking to you and are looking for the email. Also, when you search your emails, the first place the search tools look for key words is in the subject line.

Another mistake that people make is to continue an email thread by clicking on the Reply icon, without changing the subject line, even though the discussion has changed to an entirely new topic. The longer the email thread, the more likely this will happen. If the subject of the email changes somewhere along the way, the subject line needs to change accordingly.



Dealing with time critical information

If getting a reply is time critical, you can always add key words of your own in the subject line, like "URGENT: RSVP by noon on Friday," or "PLEASE REVIEW ASAP." If you need a quick response, don't send an email – try a text message or a phone call instead – or try all three if it is really urgent!

Use email etiquette in the To, Cc, Bcc, Reply and Reply All fields

People who need to take some action in response to your email should be listed in the To field, and people who don't need to take action but need to be informed about what is going on go into the Cc field. Use the Bcc (blind carbon copy) list to privately include those who need to be informed.

If an email is between two people, simply click on Reply (and change the subject line, if necessary). If you're dealing with a small family or group of friends, it's OK to use Reply All so that everyone can see your response and take it into consideration when they reply to the original sender of the email.

However, responding to an email with a lot of people using Reply All is poor etiquette because it floods everyone's inbox with lots of email responses. You can prevent this from happening when sending out an email to many people, or when using email lists from clubs or large organizations, by addressing the email to yourself, then adding your list of addressees to the Bcc field. By doing so, any Reply All responses will be sent only to you instead of everyone on the email distribution.

Some DOs and DON'Ts to consider

DO – 1) Use spell check, and re-read your email before sending; 2) put important points on separate

lines or in short paragraphs; 3) try to keep your email short and to the point; 4) when forwarding a link in an email, add a description of what the link is about so that the recipient knows what to expect; 5) set up folders to help organize your emails for later retrieval.

DON'T – 1) Don't discuss private or sensitive information in an email, unless you can encrypt it; 2) don't email when you're angry or sending bad news, if you can avoid it; 3) avoid disparaging remarks about others in an email because you can't control to whom your email may be forwarded; 4) Don't send embarrassing, sensitive or offensive images in an email; 5) don't forward an email to others without doing a few simple checks to make sure you're not forwarding a scam or propaganda (see the Tech Tips article "Don't Get Spoofed" in the December 20, 2020 issue of the Rossmoor News); 6) don't simply say "Hi" in your subject line because this is frequently the subject line of scam email.

Websites regarding email best practices

Microsoft Best Email Practices for Outlook: <https://tinyurl.com/MS-email-best-practices>

Pepperdine University communications guidelines: <https://tinyurl.com/Pepperdine-guidelines>

Note that while Zappedia is selling some software, the points it covers on email security are worthwhile considerations: <https://zappedia.com/email-security-best-practices>

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