



Guide for Sending Proper Email Messages

Best practices

The CMA Alliance considers email as an important means of communication and recognizes the importance of proper email content and speedy replies in conveying a professional image. The following are some guidelines to consider when communicating with others in regards to CMA Alliance matters:

- **Writing emails:**
 - Write well-structured emails and use short, descriptive subjects.
 - The CMAA's email style is informal. This means that sentences can be short and to the point. You can start your e-mail with 'Hi', or 'Dear', and the name of the person. Messages can be ended with 'Best Regards' or whatever you are comfortable using. The use of Internet abbreviations and characters such as smileys however, is not encouraged for more formal communications but is appropriate for informal communications.
 - Use the spell checker before you send out an email.
 - Do not send unnecessary attachments. Compress attachments larger than 200K before sending them.
 - Do not write emails in capitals.
 - Do not use cc: or bcc: fields unless the cc: or bcc: recipient is aware that you will be copying a mail to him/her and knows what action, if any, to take.
 - If you forward mails, state clearly what action you expect the recipient to take.
 - Only send emails of which the content could be displayed on a public notice board. If they cannot be displayed publicly in their current state, consider rephrasing the email, using other means of communication.
 - Only mark emails as important if they really are important.
- **Replying to emails:**
 - Emails should be answered within 48 hours when possible.

Confidential information

Avoid sending confidential information by e-mail.

32 Most Important Email Etiquette Tips:

- 1. Be concise and to the point**
- 2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions**
- 3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation**
- 4. Make it personal**
- 5. Use templates for frequently used responses**
- 6. Answer swiftly**
- 7. Do not attach unnecessary files**
- 8. Use proper structure & layout**
- 9. Do not overuse the high priority option**
- 10. Do not write in CAPITALS**
- 11. Don't leave out the message thread**
- 12. Add disclaimers to your emails**
- 13. Read the email before you send it**
- 14. Do not overuse Reply to All**
- 15. Mailings > use the bcc: field or do a mail merge**
- 16. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons**
- 17. Be careful with formatting**
- 18. Take care with rich text and HTML messages**
- 19. Do not forward chain letters**

20. Do not request delivery and read receipts
21. Do not ask to recall a message.
22. Do not copy a message or attachment without permission
23. Do not use email to discuss confidential information
24. Use a meaningful subject
25. Use active instead of passive
26. Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT
27. Avoid long sentences
28. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks
29. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters
30. Keep your language gender neutral
31. Don't reply to spam
32. Use cc: field sparingly

Expanded Information on the 32 Most Important Email Etiquette Tips

1. Be concise and to the point.

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read.

2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.

An email reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and the senders time but also cause considerable frustration.

3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation.

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression., it is also important for conveying the message properly. E-mails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text. And, if your program has a spell checking option, why not use it?

4. Make it personal.

Not only should the e-mail be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective. However, templates can be used effectively in this way, see next tip.

5. Use templates for frequently used responses.

Some questions you get over and over again, such as directions to your office or how to subscribe to your newsletter. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Word document, or use pre-formatted emails. Even better is a tool such as ReplyMate for Outlook (allows you to use 10 templates for free).

6. Answer swiftly.

People send an e-mail because they wish to receive a quick response. If they did not want a quick response they would send a letter or a fax. Therefore, each e-mail should be replied to within at least 48 hours, and preferably within the same working day. If the email is complicated, just send an email back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them. This will put the sender's mind at rest.

7. Do not attach unnecessary files.

By sending large attachments you can annoy people. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. Moreover, you need to have a good virus scanner in place.

8. Use proper structure & layout.

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and layout is very important for e-mail messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview.

9. Do not overuse the high priority option.

If you overuse the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message will come across as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.

10. Do not write in CAPITALS.

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.

11. Don't leave out the message thread.

When you reply to an email, you must include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. Some people say that you must remove the previous message since this has already been sent and is therefore unnecessary. However, I could not agree less. If you receive many emails you obviously cannot remember each individual email. This means that a 'threadless email' will not provide enough information and you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the email in order to deal with it. Leaving the thread might take a fraction longer in download time, but it will save the recipient much more time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their inbox!

12. Add disclaimers to your emails.

This item is not necessary for regularly transmitted communications between CMA Alliance members, but is useful information in general. It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect your company from liability. Consider the following scenario: an employee accidentally forwards a virus to a customer by email. The customer decides to sue your company for damages. If you add a disclaimer at the bottom of every external mail, saying that the recipient must check each email for viruses and that it cannot be held liable for any transmitted viruses, this will surely be of help to you in court (read more about email disclaimers). Another example: an employee sues the company for allowing a racist email to circulate the office. If your company has an email policy in place and adds an email disclaimer to every mail that states that employees are expressly required not to make defamatory statements, you have a good case of proving that the company did everything it could to prevent offensive emails.

13. Read the email before you send it.

A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

14. Do not overuse Reply to All.

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

15. Mailings > use the Bcc: field or do a mail merge.

When sending an email mailing, some people place all the email addresses in the To: field. There are two drawbacks to this practice: (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to a large number of recipients, and (2) you are publicizing someone else's email address without their permission. One way to get round this is to place all addresses in the Bcc: field. However, the recipient will only see the address from the To: field in their email, so if this was empty, the To: field will be blank and this might look like spamming. You could include the mailing list email address in the To: field, or even better, if you have Microsoft Outlook and Word you can do a mail merge and create one message

for each recipient. A mail merge also allows you to use fields in the message so that you can for instance address each recipient personally. For more information on how to do a Word mail merge, consult the Help section in Word.

16. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

17. Be careful with formatting.

Remember that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. When using colors, use a color that is easy to read on the background.

18. Take care with rich text and HTML messages.

Be aware that when you send an email in rich text or HTML format, the sender might only be able to receive plain text emails. If this is the case, the recipient will receive your message as a .txt attachment. Most email clients however, including Microsoft Outlook, are able to receive HTML and rich text messages.

19. Do not forward chain letters.

Do not forward chain letters. We can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

20. Do not request delivery and read receipts.

This will almost always annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. Besides, it usually does not work anyway since the recipient could have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it, so what is the use of using it? If you want to know whether an email was received it is better to ask the recipient to let you know if it was received.

21. Do not ask to recall a message.

Biggest chances are that your message has already been delivered and read. A recall request would look very silly in that case wouldn't it? It is better just to send an email to say that you have made a mistake. This will look much more honest than trying to recall a message.

22. Do not copy a message or attachment without permission.

Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator. If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.

23. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

24. Use a meaningful subject.

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a company requesting information about a product, it is better to mention the actual name of the product, e.g. 'Product A information' than to just say 'product information' or the company's name in the subject.

25. Use active instead of passive.

Try to use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, 'We will contact you today', sounds better than 'You will be contacted today'. The first sounds more personal, whereas the latter, especially when used frequently, sounds unnecessarily formal.

26. Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an email or subject line. Only use this if it is a really, really urgent or important message. Check

27. Avoid long sentences.

Try to keep your sentences to a maximum of 15-20 words. Email is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters. Also take care not to send emails that are too long. If a person receives an email that looks like a dissertation, chances are that they will not even attempt to read it!

28. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.

By sending or even just forwarding one libelous, or offensive remark in an email, you can face court cases resulting in multi-million dollar penalties.

29. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.

Check Snopes.com or another fact checking site before forwarding. If you receive an email message warning you of a new unstoppable virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most probably a hoax. By forwarding hoaxes you use valuable bandwidth and sometimes virus hoaxes contain viruses themselves, by attaching a so-called file that will stop the dangerous virus. The same goes for chain letters that promise incredible riches or ask your help for a charitable cause. Even if the content seems to be bona fide, the senders are usually not. Since it is impossible to find out whether a chain letter is real or not, the best place for it is the recycle bin.

30. Keep your language gender neutral.

In this day and age, avoid using sexist language such as: 'The user should add a signature by configuring his email program'. Apart from using he/she, you can also use the neutral gender: 'The user should add a signature by configuring the email program'.

31. Don't reply to spam.

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

32. Use cc: field sparingly.

Try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message. Also, when responding to a cc: message, should you include the other recipient in the cc: field as well? This will depend on the situation. In general, do not include the person in the cc: field unless you have a particular reason for wanting this person to see your response. Again, make sure that this person will know why they are receiving a copy.

Additional Notes: Before sending an email regarding CMAA matters to large quantities of people such as the board, committees or general membership, please make sure to send it first to the president for approval. The president should also be copied on all matters pertinent to CMAA business.