

Professional Email Guide

Email is a key mode of communication in our contemporary professional world. When writing emails in a work or academic setting, the tone and style you use will influence how others perceive you. It is crucial that you convey professionalism and respect in your message. A sloppy or impolite email can easily cost you a job or a positive reference. A well-written, professional email can be your ticket to a great internship or a glowing letter of recommendation. Use professional email etiquette when you are:

- Inquiring about internship opportunities
- Applying for a job
- Requesting a letter of recommendation
- Asking a question of a professor or supervisor
- Writing any message related to your academic or professional goals

Follow this guide to write professional emails that will make a great impression and help you take the next step in your career.

Sections of a Professional Email

Subject Line – Include a descriptive subject line stating the topic of the email. Use correct spelling and grammar. Do not leave the subject line blank!

Salutation – Open with a polite greeting such as “Dear Dr. Martinez” or “Hi Anthony.” Which greeting you use depends on how well you know the person. If you are contacting this person for the first time, choose a more formal greeting like “Dear Dr. Martinez.”

Introduction – In a few sentences (a short paragraph for longer emails), introduce yourself and explain your reason for writing. The recipient should understand exactly who you are, why you have contacted them, and what type of response or information you want.

Body – Next, state the main content of the email. This is where you get to the point and ask your question, explain why you believe you would be a great intern, etc. For a short email, this can be just a sentence or two. For longer messages, start a new paragraph.

Conclusion – In a brief paragraph, thank the person for their time and look forward to future contact. This can be just one sentence.

Closing & Signature – Sign off using a word like “Sincerely” or “Thanks,” followed by your name. Use your full name for initial contacts. You can use just your first name if you already know the recipient.

Tips for Professional Email Writing

- **Be very polite and respectful.** You can think of professional email as like writing a thank-you letter to your grandma or an elderly neighbor—not like texting your best friend.
- **Proofread your work** for correct spelling and grammar. Avoid profanity and slang.
- **Avoid decorative fonts**, script fonts, and unusual font sizes or colors.
- **Make sure your email address sounds professional!** The recipient will notice.
- **Use the appropriate titles to refer to people**, for example, Dr. Martinez instead of Ms. Martinez for someone who holds a PhD. You can usually find a person’s title via an internet search.
- **Don’t address the recipient by just their first name** unless you are truly on a first-name basis (you know this person and use first names already).
- **Be specific** and include all the information the person will need to make a reply (e.g., what section of a course you’re in, the date and time you hope to have a meeting, etc.).
- **If you are making a request, ask nicely**; don’t demand anything. Remember, if someone writes you a letter of recommendation or helps you get a job, they are doing you a big favor.
- **Not sure how to write a particular email?** Come to Career Services! We can read over your draft and make suggestions, and we will answer any questions you may have.

See Back for Examples

Don't

Unprofessional email examples

From: kittenki\$\$es@email.com

Subject: [none]

hey prof it's me from class. how long does the paper need to be

From: funguy420@hotmail.com

Subject: Need an internship

Whats up! Do you ever do internships??? I'm a student and want an internship asap. How do I get an internship at your company?

Jake

Do

Professional email examples

From: ashgarcia@school.edu

Subject: Final Paper Requirements

Hi Professor Jones,

This is Ashley Garcia from Sociology 220 003. I am writing to ask a quick question about the final paper. Is there a length requirement?

Thanks for your time!

Sincerely,
Ashley

From: jacob.lee@email.com

Subject: Internship Opportunities

Dear Ms. Sanchez,

My name is Jacob Lee, and I am currently a junior at the University of New Mexico majoring in Communication. I am writing to inquire about internship opportunities at Fun Co. My friend and colleague Sarah Smith completed an internship at Fun Co last summer, and she suggested that I contact you.

I was very interested in the projects and opportunities Sarah described, especially working with your content creation team. I have worked for The Daily Lobo, our student newspaper, for the past semester, and I believe I could make positive contributions to your company. I would be very interested in any opportunities you may have for students to get involved.

Please feel free to contact me anytime at (505) 555-5555 or by email at jacob.lee@email.com. I look forward to discussing this further with you.

Thank you,
Jacob Lee