



110 TIPS

**FOR SENDING EMAIL
THAT GETS READ—
AND GETS RESULTS**

**Read and apply
these tips to
improve your
email instantly.**

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Tip Contents

Follow the Basic Rules

When email ignores basic rules, it gets ignored as unprofessional. Be sure to apply these tips.

Help Your Readers Focus

Focused readers can follow your message and respond. These tips improve readers' focus.

Inspire Action

Readers need help to take action. Apply these tips to make things happen.

Write Quick-Read Messages

Email that takes too long to read will not be read. These tips lead to fast, efficient messages.

Use the Human Touch

Readers are human beings. They respond best to these courteous, thoughtful actions.

Know When to Phone

A phone call outdoes email in these situations.

Avoid Embarrassment

Avoid embarrassing yourself and others. Follow these tips and write with confidence.

Send Only Necessary Email

Readers will thank you for sending only essential messages. Avoid these time wasters.

Use Your Time Well

Manage email efficiently and have more time to write well.

Follow the Basic Rules

1.

Think before you type. Decide why you are writing and what you want your readers to do. Then organize your thoughts. Don't expect readers to think for you.

Help Your Readers Focus

15.

State your conclusion at the beginning, not the end, unless you must lead up to it persuasively. Example:

I recommend that we enter into a one-year contract. My reasons are explained below.

19.

When you forward email, briefly state why you have forwarded it. It is not enough to write "See below" or "FYI." In one sentence, tell why.

Inspire Action

28.

When you want readers to take several actions or answer several questions, list the items like this:

Please submit these items by February 1:

1. Completed application form
2. Resume or curriculum vitae
3. One-paragraph bio
4. Digital photograph

Do not convey such items in paragraphs, or your readers may miss some of them.

30.

Make it clear who is responsible for taking action. Avoid "We will look into other options." Who is *we*? When you have multiple readers, list a name with each action item.

Write Quick-Read Messages

39.

Use short sentences. They are faster and easier to read than long ones.

46.

Use descriptive headings. For example, rather than the heading "Recommendation," use "Recommendation: Hire a Summer Intern."

Use the Human Touch

54.

Address a group of readers as "friends," "folks," "Finance team," or another group title. When writing to everyone, consider "Greetings" or "Greetings, everyone."

61.

Be sure you are not being so concise that you seem abrupt. Even a word like "Fine" can seem abrupt when it stands alone. Instead state a complete thought such as "That sounds fine to me."

Know When to Phone

70.

When your goal is to build relationships with clients, customers, and coworkers, don't type to them—pick up the phone and talk to them. And use the phone to reconnect after an absence.

74.

If you are unsure how your reader will interpret your message, pick up the phone or talk in person to help the other person understand. Do not email.

Avoid Embarrassment

80.

Review email before you forward it to others. Be sure nothing in it will embarrass the writer or readers. Delete personal information and private conversations before forwarding.

88.

To avoid accidentally sending a reply in Outlook, type a word of gibberish on the **Copy to** line (like *lkdjkl*). The gibberish prevents the email from going out. When you are ready to send the message, delete the gibberish.

Send Only Necessary Email

93.

Take time to find out who needs your message. Do not send an email to a team of 20 people when only 2 actually need it. Otherwise, you waste the time of 18 others.

96.

When you reply to a request, pay attention to what your reader wants. Read or skim the entire message before writing your reply. Then skim again before pressing **Send**. If you follow this tip, you will not have to respond to repeat requests.

Use Your Time Well

102.

Use email to ask for action, ask a question, and convey quick information. Do *not* use email to discuss, strategize, problem solve, or coach. Email is inefficient and may be insensitive in those situations.

Why Use These Tips?

People get too much email. Because of the volume of email and the time it takes to read and act on it, much of what gets written never gets read. Announcements, requests, and other important messages linger in email inboxes—or are deleted—simply because readers cannot handle them quickly and easily. Even more email does not get a response—or not the response the sender wanted.

These tips will help you send efficient, effective email that gets read and gets results. The ideas come from hundreds of employees and managers who told me why they do not read and cannot take action on much of the email they receive. They shared their hopes, strategies, and suggestions for more effective email. I have shaped their ideas into these 110 tips.

I know these tips will help your email get read—and get results. Just choose a few and start using them!

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About the Author

Since 1990, Lynn Gaertner-Johnston has helped thousands of employees and managers write better at Microsoft, Boeing, AAA, Ledcor, Russell Investments, Port of Seattle, Nintendo, and other organizations. Through her company, Syntax Training, Lynn delivers in-house and public business writing courses, with tools, tips, strategies, and job aids that help people write better, guaranteed. She has also taught in the MBA program at the University of Washington.

Lynn writes a monthly e-newsletter, *Better Writing at Work*, for more than 8,500 subscribers, and her blog, Business Writing, gets thousands of daily visitors from around the globe.

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