

## Professional E-mail Etiquette

E-mail issues have developed into a real problem with professionalism and viruses and spam. Sending an e-mail to an employer or instructor is different than sending e-mail to a friend. Also, today many viruses or worms can make reading your e-mail a challenge. For example today e-mails arrive from unknown persons on a regular basis. Another issue is time management. Often 20-30 unread messages will show up in the inbox at once so they must be prioritized. For these reasons, every e-mail you send should contain a subject line with this class number as part of the subject line. Example: BSED 295—E-mail Assignment or BMGT 493 Case Review.

You need to remember that a real person will be reading your e-mail. Therefore, you should put some type of greeting, Dear Dr. Lear or just Dr. Lear. **Greetings** are optional but show excellent e-mail etiquette because it focuses on the reader. **Messages**, on the other hand, are not optional. If you send a file to an instructor, you should put in at least one line of text even if your primary goal is to send an attached file. (Assignment xyz is attached.)

A **signature** is not optional either. You should plan to sign your name at the end of the message. You may use just your first name or your first and last name, but this line replaces your handwritten signature in a letter.

A **signature file**, completely different from the signature, reflects information that is appended to every e-mail that you send. This information is **not** the signature. You do not rekey the information. You build the file in Lotus Notes and/or any other e-mail account you have and check a box that appends it to every message. Signature file example:

Susan P. Smith, Ph.D.  
University of NE at Kearney  
306 Buell Hall  
learj@unk.edu  
308.865.1234

**Subject lines** are not optional. They define the importance of your message for the recipient. For this reason your subject line should be brief, but descriptive.

The **message body** should follow some important guidelines. Be brief and direct using active voice if possible. Cover only one topic when writing, and avoid humor. Focus on your reader. Also do not use text message short-cuts. E-mails are not text-messages and can be used as legal documents. Readers tend to scan e-mail, at least at first, so have short sentences and paragraphs. Using bullets to enumerate your points is a good way to put in information. They are also not considered private so keep that in mind when composing your message.

Persons from the business world have visited with me about the unprofessional e-mails they receive from students and employees. When informally conversing with a friend, you can use whatever type of structure you prefer. When sending e-mail in a professional environment, you should practice professional etiquette.

**Example** in message area of e-mail:

Dr. Lear

[Message, at least one line of text, goes here.]

Sam [Your name goes here to replace signature.]

[Signature file will be appended here.]