Email Netiquette Guide

In an effort to reduce processing times, strengthen customer service, send fewer emails, and ensure quality of email sent, the following guidelines should be reviewed and adopted for each unit based on their needs.

Before Sending an Email

1. Ask: Is email the right medium for this message? Never deliver bad news via email, instead, pick up the phone and have a conversation or schedule a meeting to discuss in person.
2. Review checklist:
   - ✓ Why am I writing this email?
   - ✓ Who is my audience and what is their point of view?
   - ✓ What is the main point?
   - ✓ What kind of information should I include?
   - ✓ What is the best way to organize the information?
3. Three types of email
   - Providing information
   - Requesting information
   - Requesting action

Composing a Good Email Message

1. Subject Line
   - Should be descriptive and concise, revealing the high points or summarizing the message (e.g. *Lunch rescheduled to Monday @ 1pm; Reminder: Friday is casual day;* or *Thanks for the new schedule, it looks great!)*
   - Note urgency or timeliness of response needed.
   - When replying or forwarding, ensure that the subject still accurately reflects the content of your message. If not, change it.
   - Clearly articulate purpose or action request (if appropriate). Examples:

For Action	For Approval	For Comment
Urgent	A Request	Confidential
An Update	HELP	FYI

   - When possible, send a message that is only a subject line. If your subject line is the whole message, add EOM (end of message) at the end--e.g. *Cake in conference room at 10:30 today (EOM).*
2. Body of Message
   - Restrict yourself to a single topic per email message
   - **Be succinct**: Summarize topic at front of email
   - Put any request near top of message and clearly state when you will need it
   - Keep sentences short and their structure simple
   - Subheadings (if necessary)
   - Number your questions/requests
   - When sending to multiple people, identify what each person needs to respond to
   - DON'T USE CAPITAL LETTERS: This equates to shouting in email
3. Responding to Email
   - Reduce "reply all." Limit replies to only those who need a response
   - Reduce "thank you" only replies
   - Reply as soon as possible; no more than 24 hour response

- Adjust subject line if needed to match message if the topic has shifted from the original email
- Use departmental Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) responses when appropriate.
- When email is not working or you see multiple emails on the same topic with no resolution, pick up the phone or ask for a meeting
- If over a weekend and you have the option, delay delivery to working hours

Copying Others / Forwarding Messages
- "cc" means courtesy copy, or FYI only; no action required
- "bcc" should be used sparingly if at all. Keep communications transparent.
- Be cautious about adding others to a forwarded email if originator did not include them
- Ask permission of sender before forwarding a message to another individual or group
- Generally speaking, do not change wording of original message when forwarding email

Before you Send
- Check tone
- Use spell-check before you send a message
- Make sure subject line matches content of your message
- Re-read your message before sending

Away from the Office
- Consistently use vacation or away messages for one or more days away
- Make arrangements for your email to be redirected / forwarded to another email account, or use the Web Mail Auto reply facility to notify senders when you will be away
- When you return, disable the auto reply via Web Mail so that senders no longer receive your "away" message or set it up to automatically disable on a date you choose when you set up your vacation message

Using a Script
- Developing a standard script may be the best approach for departments that have multiple individuals responding to client inquiries. Examples of possible scripts follow.
- *Script #1 When responding to an email request:*

  Good morning/afternoon Ms./Mr./Dr._____,

  I'll be the point person to respond to your email. I will respond again within 24 hours with a solution. Please feel free to contact me at this email address with any additional information you would like to provide.

  Have a great day,

  [responder name]

  [Unit], University of Washington

- *Script #2 When forwarding an email request:*

  Good morning/afternoon Ms./Mr./Dr._____,

  I'm sharing your request with [ORC colleague name], who handles [subject area]. Please let me know if they do not respond to you within 24 hours.

  Have a great day,

[responder name]

[Unit], University of Washington

- *Script #3 if forwarding Urgent message*

    Good morning/afternoon Ms./Mr./Dr._____,

    I'm sharing your request with [ORC colleague name], who handles [subject area].

    Have a great day,

    [responder name]

    *Follow-up with either the requestor or the person handling the request to make sure the urgent request was handled to the satisfaction of the requestor.