

# Email Etiquette

## FOR A BUSY WORLD

How many email messages do you send every day? If you're like most of us, it's dozens, perhaps scores of them. Now, are you doing anything to make the recipients of your email ... annoyed or possibly angry?

There's quite a lot of subtle (and not so subtle) etiquette involved in sending email messages. And if you don't want to tick off your recipients, you would do well to master these tips for practicing good email manners.

### Brevity can be off-putting

How many times have you received an extremely brief email message? It's easy to think that the sender is angry with you for some reason.

But what if the sender was sending the message through an iPhone or iPad? It's not always easy to type on small mobile devices. And for that reason, many of us keep our messages short when typing on those annoyingly constraining pop-up keyboards.

To let recipients know that this is the reason for your brevity, create a specific signature for any email accounts that you use on smartphones and tablets.

According to the website [Mashable](#), this signature should tell people that you're emailing from a mobile device, and that's why your message is so short. Something like "Excuse my brevity; I'm typing this on my iPhone" should do the trick.

### Always reply

CBS News reminds you to always reply when you receive an email message. Our inboxes are often flooded with emails. It can seem like a challenge to

respond to them all. But ignoring an email message is rude, CBS News says, and can turn people off. CBS News suggests that sometimes a simple “Thanks” is all that senders need to feel confident that you've received and are considering their message.

### **Always proofread**

CBS News also wisely recommends that you take the time to actually proofread your email messages before sending them. It's tempting to quickly dash off a message and hit "send." Doing so, though, can leave you with a message that's filled with typos—which can make you look silly and/or unprofessional. Worse yet, you might forget to include an important attachment. Don't rush. It's not the end of the world if your email contains imperfections, but it's smart and polite to make sure that you are sending out a professional email message.

### **Be polite and don't shout**

PR firm Ragan recommends that you remember your basic offline manners when composing email messages. This means including those magic words in your messages, “please” and “thank you.” Too often, in the rush of composing and sending emails, we forget these niceties. Ragan also warns against shouting in your email messages. To those who don't know, “shouting” means TYPING IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. This looks incredibly annoying on the computer screen.

# How to Safely Use the Reply (to) All Button

Every day we get bombarded with email messages we don't want. The problem is that these unwanted messages make it harder to see the important ones that we do want.

We're quick to point fingers at anonymous spammers selling fake Rolexes and male enhancement drugs, but maybe the problem is closer to home ...

Is the 'Reply All' button the major culprit behind our overflowing inboxes? In other words, is spam mostly a problem of our own making? And to ask a related question: How much humiliation could we spare ourselves if we got smarter about using—or not using—the reply all button?

## Lost productivity

According to data cited in a Bloomberg BusinessWeek article, at least 15 percent of a typical office worker's day is spent on email, and 5 percent of emails received are replies to all. While that might sound like a small percentage, think about those stats over time ... what you have is "death by a thousand cuts."

BusinessWeek reports that the misuse of the reply-all button has some companies considering an outright ban on its use, and a handful of businesses have gone as far as to use in-house programmers to remove the button from employees' view.

## Mistakes were made ...

The reply all button is simply an inanimate thing, of course, which means it's not something we can truly blame. The question is how we (as users) use and abuse this button ... it's a question of etiquette.

But sometimes it's just simple human error—perhaps compounded by bad design: the Reply All button is just a few short pixels away from the Reply button.

Everyone makes mistakes, right? Even those of us who should know better! Last fall, a student from NYU (who was studying computer science, of all things) accidentally replied to all 40,000 of his classmates—to their extreme annoyance. The event was soon dubbed the “Reply All-pocalypse.”

## Fight back

This isn’t a newly diagnosed problem. Back in 2009, Sperry Software developed an Outlook add-on that issues a pop-up warning every time a user clicked the reply all button, making it less likely to accidentally share, say, a delicate HR matter or a snarky comment about a colleague with the entire company.

Since then, most major email providers have begun to take the reply-all problem seriously. Microsoft introduced its own plug-in called NoReplyAll. And Google, whose Gmail is the most widely used free email service, rolled out a “Mute” button to give weary users an escape from endless email gabfests.

Despite these advances, it’s still up to us, as users, to exercise good judgment and do our part to reduce internal workplace spam. It’s our policy that you should have a really good reason every time you decide to respond to a mass mailer.

What’s your policy? Just hit reply and let us know. 😊

## Recommended reading

### **Email Etiquette: 8 Tips for a More Civilized Inbox – Mashable**

<http://mashable.com/2012/09/20/email-manners/>

### **9 keys to email etiquette – CBS News**

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505143\\_162-57411851/9-keys-to-email-etiquette/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505143_162-57411851/9-keys-to-email-etiquette/)

### **17 email etiquette tips – Ragan**

[http://www.ragan.com/Main/Articles/17\\_email\\_etiquette\\_tips\\_45096.aspx#](http://www.ragan.com/Main/Articles/17_email_etiquette_tips_45096.aspx#)

### **The Top 10 Rules of Business Email Etiquette – RingCentral**

<http://blog.ringcentral.com/2012/11/10-dos-and-donts-of-email-etiquette/>

### **Email etiquette: peers, professors and professionals – ZDnet**

<http://www.zdnet.com/blog/igeneration/email-etiquette-peers-professors-and-professionals/14798>

### **Eradicating 'Reply All' – BusinessWeek**

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-21/eradicating-reply-all>