HOW TO WRITE A PROFESSIONAL EMAIL

Crafting an email to employers, professors, and Institute staff can be challenging, especially due to the casual nature of current smart phone communication. Appropriate written communication is a critical part of portraying yourself to others, as it leaves a lasting impression on the reader. This handout will provide you with best practices and tips for writing professional emails at school and in the workplace.

Why should I always write professional emails?

- **Impressions are important.** Your email may be the first impression you leave on someone. Whether they be faculty and staff of the Institute or a prospective employer, you will leave a positive impression of yourself should your emails be professional in manner.
- **Clear communication is key.** Only 7% of communication is conveyed through actual words. Body language and tone of voice make up the overwhelming majority of our communication with others. When you remove these components from the equation, your words begin to matter so much more! Say *exactly* what you mean in a clear and concise manner.
- **Start early and send often.** You may not yet be searching for co-ops or full-time jobs, but you are setting yourself up for success in the future. If you begin to write professional emails now, to professors and staff, you will more easily make the transition into the workplace while on co-op.

Anatomy of an Email:

- Your **subject line should be related to the topic** at hand and potentially include your name. This will give the reader a good indication of what to expect in the body.
- **Begin with a greeting.** Think "*Dear Professor McGonagall…*" or "*Hello Mr. Baggins…*".
- **State your purpose.** Why are you writing to this person? "*I'm writing to inquire about…*" or "*I'm writing in response to…*".
- And/or **thank the recipient.** Everyone's time is valuable and a note of appreciation goes a long way. If someone took time out of their day to answer your inquiry, thank them.
- **Add final remarks.** Do you have a summary point to make? Are you concerned about the reader missing a critical part of the message? Revisit that point here.
- **End with a closing.** You don't have to say "*sincerely*" every time you send an email. Depending on the recipient you could say something like "*best regards*" or "*thank you*" or "*cheers*".
- **Create a signature line.** Include contact information (email and phone), as it allows the recipient to get back to you using various channels should the reply be urgent. Do this for both computer and smart phone.

Tips and Best Practices:

- **Be brief and polite.** Most people have dozens of emails to get through each day. If you can make your request short and kind, it will make it easier for someone to answer.
- **DON'T USE ALL CAPITALS** – it reads like you're shouting. Avoid excessive use of exclamation points, too!
- Likewise, **don't use all lower-case** letters, as that is grammatically incorrect (e.g. "I" instead of "I").
- If you are using "please" and "thank you", actually mean it. As mentioned above, **tone is not well conveyed over text** and you'll want to avoid sarcasm.
- **Edit, proofread, and spellcheck BEFORE you send.** Typos and run-on sentences are no fun to read through and don't make a good impression.
- **Promptly reply to serious messages.** And always abide by the 24-hour rule. Try to answer all emails within that time-frame, as that is typically what is expected in the workplace. If you can't, send a brief explanation as to why you need more time to write a full response.
- **Follow-up** after an appropriate amount of time has passed. If you are applying to a job, wait one to two weeks. If you are making an inquiry of a professor or Institute staff, 24- to 48-hours is appropriate.
- If you are trying **to schedule an appointment**, give the reader options to choose from and never request the same day. Abiding by these rules will nearly always get you the response you need in the reply, as opposed to going back and forth over several messages.

➢ **If your message is urgent**, indicate that and then explain why you need a quick response. When you can, consider making a phone call instead.
➢ **Check your email daily,** especially during the job search process. Important messages will also be delivered to your WIT email from professors, advisors, and Institute staff.

<u>**Sample Professional Emails**</u>:

Sending an Inquiry

> Subject: **Your First and Last Name** Concern/Issue/Question about **X**
>
> Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. **Last Name**,
>
> I have a quick/complicated question/issue about which I'd like to inquire.
>
> Could you please help me with **insert issue here**? I am happy to discuss the matter further with you in person or over the phone.
>
> Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.
>
> **Insert Signature Here**

Following-Up on an Inquiry

> **Subject**: Follow-up from **Your First and Last Name**
>
> Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. **Last Name**,
>
> I am following up on my recent inquiry for the **refer to last message**.
>
> Could you please update me on the status of the original request? I am happy to discuss the matter further with you in person or over the phone.
>
> Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.
>
> Sincerely,
> **Your First and Last Name**
> huntingtona@wit.edu
> **617-989-0000**

Sending a Response

> **Subject**: Re: **Title of Original Message**
>
> Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. **Last Name**,
>
> Thank you for your prompt response. I appreciate you taking the time to consider my request/question/concern. **Insert follow-up questions or information here.**
>
> **Insert Signature Here**