

# Writing Clear, Effective Business E-mail Script

## Workshop Contents

- When do you communicate by letter, e-mail, or talking?
- Follow good business e-mail etiquette.
- Write e-mail that works.
- Writing a response e-mail
- Writing a request e-mail
- Writing an e-mail describing a business problem
- Writing an e-mail to persuade

## Sample: Write E-mail that Works

In the next section of this class, I will show you how to write e-mail that works. It gets the results you want.

### Write a Subject Line that Communicates

1. Always write a subject line for every e-mail.
2. Make the subject line fit your objectives for the e-mail:
  - Inform

Jane Smith Interview Confirmation

"IMPORTANT - Results of the test." "RESPONSE NEEDED BY 5:00 TODAY."

Outline for Tuesday's meeting & minutes

Meeting January 10 - Attendance Required Ideas for Recruiting

Final Report – for your reference

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate action or stop action</li> <li>• Provide reference material</li> <li>• Persuade</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Convey the message's importance in the subject line.</li> <li>4. Write the subject line for the reader, not the subject.</li> <li>5. Subject lines can be two to five words. You do not need full sentences.</li> <li>6. Include the key terms among the first three words.</li> <li>7. Capitalize a word sparingly.</li> <li>8. Capitalize words that normally should be capitalized, such as "I" for yourself.</li> <li>9. Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct.</li> <li>10. To combine two different ideas, use a combiner (and, &amp;, ;, or +).</li> </ol>	<p>Your expertise for the research</p>
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Always write a subject line that fits your e-mail. If you're replying back and forth, make sure the subject stays relevant to what's in the e-mail. When the e-mail subject changes, change the subject line.

The subject line often determines how quickly the reader will read and respond to the e-mail. Your goal is to make sure your e-mail is read and the reader responds as you expect. So the subject line is the first part of your strategy to write e-mails that have impact.

Make the subject line reflect the objectives you have for the e-mail:

If the goal of your e-mail is to inform, state the central message in a few words. Choose key terms the

reader will understand immediately. If you are responding to a request, include the key terms that were in the request.

If the goal of your e-mail is to get an action or stop an action, state the action that must begin or must stop in the subject line. One company has employees write ACTION REQUIRED, then the subject of the e-mail. That lets the reader know that he or she must read this e-mail to learn what the action is and when it must begin or stop.

If the goal of your e-mail is to provide reference material the reader will have to retrieve later, make sure the first key term is one the reader might think of when looking through an alphabetical list of e-mail messages.

If you want to persuade or have the reader respond to an appeal, in the subject line write what is of interest to the reader, or benefits the reader will receive if the results of the e-mail come about.

If the contents are very important or have a time constraint, you may state that in the subject line: "IMPORTANT - Results of the test." "RESPONSE NEEDED BY 5:00 TODAY." Use such appeals infrequently. If you use them regularly, people will learn to disregard them when they come from you.

Since most e-mails are brief, subject lines can be two to five words.

Use the key term for the subject in the first three words.

Occasionally you might capitalize a word for emphasis, but do so only if you have an unusually good reason to do so.

Capitalize words that normally should be capitalized, such as "I" for yourself.

Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct. The spell checker doesn't check subject lines.

If you're combining two completely unique ideas, it is OK to use a combiner to join them. For example, a subject line such as "Meeting Date plus sign Project Guidelines" tells the reader what the message will contain with a minimal number of words.

## Write a Subject Line That Communicates

1. Open with a salutation.
2. Introduce yourself.
3. Explain why the reader is receiving this

Hello Bob,

As you know, we've decided to focus on quality to bring our products up to the level we all want them to be. We also have been experiencing some errors because the part-time PERL programmer we're using just doesn't have the time to devote to our projects while going to school.

<p>now.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Let the reader know what he or she is to do with the information if appropriate.</li> <li>5. State the most important idea or the action.</li> <li>6. Write a buffer if necessary.</li> <li>7. State what is in the remainder of the e-mail.</li> <li>8. If the e-mail contains more than one main point, list them all.</li> </ol>	<p>At the next meeting I believe we should ask permission to hire a dedicated PERL programmer for our technical services staff.</p> <p>This new position wouldn't interfere with your plans to hire another systems analyst, however. We can ensure that.</p> <p>These are my thoughts.</p> <p>[continues here].</p>
<p>Manage the reader right from the beginning of your e-mail. You will be most successful if you give the reader everything he or she needs to understand perfectly, starting with the first words.</p> <p>Open with a courteous salutation. You may use the standard "Dear" even though the person to whom you're writing is usually not dear to you, and may be notably non-dear to you.</p> <p>The trend in e-mails is to begin with a natural, conversational opening, such as "Hello Jim" or "Good morning Freda." Address the individual by name. Use proper titles like "Mr." or "Ms." if the e-mail is going to someone you don't know. You may simply use the person's first name if you've had previous correspondence or know the person well. Skip one blank line between the salutation and the first line of text.</p> <p>If the e-mail is going to several people, write the readers' names unless the list is too long. Try not to use a general term like "Management" or "All staff."</p> <p>Always introduce yourself if the reader doesn't know you. That lets the reader know you're someone worth listening to, and it builds a feeling of partnering with the reader. You will be most successful if the reader feels you are working together. If you are writing to a customer, state your name, position, and, if relevant, your duties in the company.</p> <p>Next, explain why the reader is receiving this now. Even if this resulted from a phone call or you're sure the reader will remember why you wrote this e-mail, remind the reader of what is behind it. That saves the reader time in trying figure out why he or she is receiving this now, and it gives the reader a feeling that you're on top of things. It looks good for you and your company. Don't include too much detail—just enough to remind the reader.</p> <p>Let the reader know what to do with this e-mail. If the content is for reference only state that: "This information is for you to have as reference in case this situation arises in the future." If the reader should use the information to prepare for a discussion, state that: "Use this information to prepare ideas for the product-development meeting on Tuesday."</p>	

Include a buffer if necessary. If you know the e-mail message may have a negative impact, begin with the most positive tone appropriate.

State what is in the remainder of the e-mail.

You should be able to summarize any e-mail you send in one sentence. If you have trouble doing so, it may be a sign that your e-mail is too long or rambles. Write more than one sentence, if necessary, describing the contents. Then decide whether all of it is relevant to your message.

If your e-mail contains more than one point, list them when you state the contents.

## **Summary: Subject Line and Opening**

This is a summary of the subject line and opening:

- Write a subject line for every e-mail that fits your objectives for the e-mail.
- Convey the message's importance in the subject line and write it for the reader.
- Subject lines can be two to five words, with the key terms among the first three words.
- Capitalize words sparingly, but do capitalize words that normally should be capitalized.
- Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct.
- To combine two different ideas, you may use a combiner (and, &, ,, or +).
- Open with a salutation and introduce yourself.
- Remind the reader of the reason for this e-mail.
- Write a buffer if necessary.
- Let the reader know what he or she is to do with the information if appropriate.
- State what is in the remainder of the e-mail, listing main points if there is more than one.

