E-mail Etiquette:
Survival Tips to Stay Organized

E-mail technology is great, but it can also be a real time waster. Follow these tips to stay organized and effective while using e-mail to *your* advantage. The following is summarized from Harvard Business School's "Working Knowledge" online newsletter.

- Remember KISS. When sending or responding to e-mail, keep it simple son!
- Decide if e-mail is the best way to communicate. Time-sensitive information, as well as potential conflicts, should be handled either face-to-face or on the phone. E-mail may be "instant," but not for everyone. Also, e-mails don't always deliver your tone of voice properly, which can result in miscommunication at critical, sensitive times.
- Understand how he or she prefers to be reached. Determine how quickly she will respond. Some people are buried under e-mail and don't reply quickly. If something is important, use the phone or if she works in your company, make a visit.
- Respond only when necessary. If no action is required, avoid replying with something generic like "OK" or "Thanks"; it clogs up inboxes.
- Act within 24 hours, if possible. This isn't always feasible, but it's a best practice we can all strive to achieve. Remember it doesn't have to be perfect, just professional.
- Insert recipient names in the "To" field only when you've finished your message. This prevents sending e-mails too soon with a quick click of the "send" button.
- Reread for tone. Before sending any message, read it from the recipient's point of view. If anything could be misunderstood or taken the wrong way, carefully reword for greater clarity. E-mail can impact your professional image, so choose your words carefully.
- Use a subject line to *summarize*, not *describe*. Make your subject rich enough that your readers can decide whether it's urgent.
- Ask yourself why you're sending to each recipient, and let them know at the start of the message what they should do with it. This will also force *you* to consider why you're including each person.
- Make action requests clear. If you want things to get done, say so. Clearly. Summarize action items so everyone can read them at one glance and knows what to do.
- Edit forwarded messages. If someone sends you a message, don't forward it without editing it. Make it appropriate for the ultimate recipient and make sure it doesn't get the original sender in trouble.
- Check e-mail at defined times each day. We hate telemarketers during dinner, so why tolerate e-mail when we're trying to get something done? Turn off your e-mail "auto check" and only check e-mail two times a day when **you** choose. When it's time, ignore the phone, and blast through the messages.
- Use file folders to save important emails to view later. Use big categories and clean these out often.
- Send unwanted e-mails to spam right away. Don't wait until later, do it now.

The bottom line: Trust your judgment and delete at will, file saved e-mails in folders, and send unwanted e-mail to junk or spam right away. The goal, believe it or not, is to keep your inbox empty or close to it!   2016

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