

## 8. DON'T reply by sending the whole thread back

When you reply, do NOT include the entire message from the sender and all previous messages (the thread) unless it's essential for understanding your reply. Generally, it's better to snip out a pertinent excerpt and include only that with your reply.

## 9. DO wait before you answer if you're "hot"

If you write when you're angry, you'll write the best message you will always regret. Let your response sit at least overnight. Then edit it to use gentler language. Maybe even have a peer check it before you send.

Variant: If Joe insulted you, wait a little bit before you tell Jill and Jane. Joe may apologize. Then you'll have the embarrassing task of writing Jill and Jane *again* to say that you reacted too soon.

## 10. DON'T use REPLY ALL

REPLY ALL is convenient—and dangerous! Are you replying confidentially to a group list instead of one person? Oops! Will someone in the cc list be offended by your remarks? Try these alternatives:

- Use FORWARD or just REPLY instead, and add cc recipients *carefully*.
- On every message – before you hit SEND – make sure you look carefully at ALL recipients.

## 11. DO manage and file your e-mail

Create folders in your e-mail program so you can file your mail. Create filtering rules to automatically file incoming mail. It's also good to clean out e-mail periodically. Too much e-mail clutter may make it harder to find that important message you must retrieve. Misfiled e-mail is as good as lost e-mail, so be careful!



The Technical Writing Company

552 BROCK ROAD • NEVADA CITY, CA 95959-2908 USA  
VOICE 530.265.4705 • TOLL-FREE 1.800.529.9907 • FAX 530.478.1387  
[www.wvswrite.com/](http://www.wvswrite.com/) • [info@wvswrite.com](mailto:info@wvswrite.com)



The Technical Writing Company

# 999 Great Ways to Improve Your E-mail

OK, we're exaggerating, but we do have quite a few tips to help you write e-mail that gets read and answered. We're confident writing better e-mail messages will make you more productive.

These ideas are brought to you by the writing experts at WVS – The Technical Writing Company. If you need technical writing, marketing writing, white papers, editing, courseware, or instruction in better writing, we're as near as your phone or computer: 530-265-4705, [info@wvswrite.com](mailto:info@wvswrite.com)

Here are 11 great ways to improve your e-mail.

## 1. DO use a clear, brief subject line

Don't let your e-mail get trapped by the spam filter! Similarly, don't let the reader think your message is just chitchat. Your subject line should and briefly tell your reader what the message is about.

- **BAD:** How are you? I wanted to respond to your report request
- **GOOD:** June sales report, Western Region

## 2. DO write about ONE SUBJECT ONLY

How many times have you written several paragraphs or questions, only to have the reader respond just to the first one or the last one? Simplify your messages:

1. Keep your message short and cover only one topic if possible.
2. If you must cover multiple topics, number them, and keep each item brief.
3. In your close, ask for a reply to **each** numbered item.

## 3. DO use BULLETS, NUMBERS, BOLDING and COLOR in your messages

Your meaning will come across more clearly if you highlight key sentences and passages. Most e-mail programs support it, and most recipients welcome it (as long as you don't overuse it). Highlight the most important ideas, not everything.

- **BAD:** Please send your comments by **COB**, Wednesday, **June 5<sup>th</sup>**.
- **GOOD:** Please send your comments by **COB**, **Wednesday**, **June 5<sup>th</sup>**.

## 4. DON'T use fancy fonts

Fancy fonts make messages hard to read. Simple black sans serif fonts, such as Arial, are easier to read on screen than your favorite trick font.

- **BAD:** *I wanted to write you back about the meeting on Wednesday.*
- **GOOD:** I wanted to write you back about the meeting on Wednesday.

## 5. DO proofread and use the spell checker

Nothing says you are careless more loudly than a message full of typos. We're all in a hurry sometimes, but avoid the embarrassment. Use the spell checker, and read the message carefully all the way through before you hit SEND.

## 6. DO use a signature, but only when appropriate

Signatures (SIG.TXT) are a great way to advertise your business and ensure recipients know who is sending. But be sure to delete the signature in casual e-mail. It's annoying to get a one-line e-mail that has a half-page signature from a first-name friend or associate. Business signatures should include these items:

Your Name  
Your Title  
Your Company's Name  
Phone Number and E-mail Address  
Website URL

## 7. DO reply to all personal (and some business) messages

Just as it's rude to receive a gift without saying thank you, it's rude to receive e-mail from someone you know and not acknowledge it. Respond to every e-mail, even if all you say is, "Thank you!" If you don't, the sender doesn't know whether you received the message.

In business, it's even more important. Sometimes a simple response, like "Got the report. Thanks! I'll look at it this morning" does a lot of good. It tells your sender that you got the message, but it's also a chance to say thanks, and to declare an action you will take.