



The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Composing Professional Emails

A business email is a type of professional document that gives directions, outlines procedures, requests data, supplies a response and confirms decisions. The five main components of a business email are the subject line, the greeting, the body, the closing and the signature.

General Guidelines

- Consider who the reader is and why they should care about this subject
- Ask readers to take an action and/or be aware of something
- Be polite and respectful
- Include dates, times, and places when relevant
- Use concise language
- Avoid sarcasm to prevent misinterpretation
- Be aware of others' privacy when forwarding messages
 - Remove that ugly string of FWD:FWD:FWD: or RE:RE:RE:
- Be considerate of time limitations when setting/requesting deadlines
- When attaching a file, always refer to the file in the body of the email
 - Announce its presence, explain its significance, and provide directions
- Do not use business email accounts for personal use

Formatting Considerations

- Limit emails to one screen in length
 - Don't make readers scroll unless absolutely necessary
 - If the message won't fit, email is probably not the right medium
- Leave white space between salutations, paragraphs, and signatures
- Use bullets and/or numbers for lists and ideas
- Avoid potentially unfamiliar acronyms/abbreviations and clichés
- Avoid emoticons, colors, or other confusing symbols
- Use correct spelling, grammar, and mechanics
- Avoid typing in all caps or all lowercase letters

	Send	Save	Close				Check Names	X
1. →	To...	professor.johnson@ucdenver.edu						
2. →	Cc...							
3. →	Bcc...							
	Subject:	ENGL2030-008: Appointment Request						
	Attachments...							
4. →	Hi, Prof. Johnson-							
5. →	I would like to meet with you to discuss the feedback you gave me on the last assignment. I found many of your comments helpful but there were a few that I didn't quite understand. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend your regular office hours due to my work schedule. Would you be able to meet briefly before or after our 2 p.m. class either on Monday (9/10) or Wednesday (9/12) of next week?							
6. →	If this is possible, I hope to hear back from you by this Friday (9/7). Thank you for your time in advance.							
7. →	Best, Sally Student							

1. **Cc (Carbon copy):**

- Ensures all interested persons are up-to-date with the conversation
- Mentions all recipients in the body of the message
- Never used to blow the whistle or “tattle,” (e.g., copying the boss to get someone in trouble)

2. **Bcc (Blind carbon copy):**

- Useful for protecting the privacy of recipients on large mailing lists
- Considered unethical and a breach of conversation privacy for most other uses

3. **Subject Line:**

- Provides a concise topic to help readers determine the priority of the message
- Avoids one-word descriptions (e.g., Important, Help, or Urgent)

4. **Greeting:**

- Uses the addressee's name and includes their title (e.g., Ms., Dr., Professor)
- Uses formal phrasing with title (e.g., “Hello” or “Good Afternoon”)

5. **Body:**

- States purpose in the first sentence and explains the issue logically
- Limits the number of topics for clarity and avoids multiple requests in a single email

6. **Closing:**

- Defines a clear deadline for response
- Provides a call for needed action

7. **Signature:**

- Uses phrases or words conveying respect and formality (e.g., “Sincerely,” “Best regards,” “Best”)
- Includes full contact information, when necessary

For further information/related concepts, please see the following handouts:

- Principles of Business Writing