

# Outlook Email – 10 Golden Rules

## **1. Write a clear, detailed subject line**

Spend the time to write a subject line that gets a reader's attention and you will likely get a response from the person. Write a subject line that:

- informs the reader of the **purpose** or **function** of the email
- be specific enough to distinguish it from other email in a crowded inbox
- allow for easy email management (searching and filing).

## **2. Identify the purpose of the message**

Always ask yourself, "What do I want the person who receives this message to know or do?"

- inform,
- persuade, or
- request information

## **3. Identify the right readers**

Send emails *only* to those for whom the information is relevant will help a writer determine:

- what type of information, and how much detail to provide
- how to organize and sequence the information.

## **4. Specify the desired reader response**

Indicate the desired reader response in the subject line or early in the email message:

- if action is needed, make it clear what action is required
- if no action or reply is expected, say so: "*No reply necessary.*"
- anticipate possible questions that the reader may have

## **5. Organise the content**

Always begin by creating a purpose statement, and then:

- present the key points of the content
- organize a logical flow of information
- group relevant information together
- identify what action is expected of the recipients.

## **6. Be concise**

Show readers you appreciate their time, by making email short and simple to answer, using as few words as possible:

- introduce yourself (if necessary)
- provide a context for the email, if necessary
- explain *why* you are emailing the reader
- provide any specific and relevant details the reader needs, and
- if you expect a response, clarify what it is and when you need it.

## **7. Improve readability**

Writers can make information more visual and easier to scan or read by:

- breaking dense text into **smaller units** makes information easier to read and retain
- **labelling** each smaller unit of information helps to scan and find information quickly, or skip information they don't need
- using **formatting** devices such as bold, bullets, tables, highlighting, and "white space" reduces the density of text and makes reading emails faster and easier.

## **8. Use plain language**

Improve your emails with plain language by:

- writing short sentences and paragraphs
- avoiding wordy language or sentence constructions
- using simple, informal words instead of jargon or "corporate" words
- using the active voice instead of passive voice
- spelling out acronyms
- use plain but good English

## **9. Review and edit**

Always read through your finished email and edit for accuracy and completeness:

- use spell checker and grammar tools
- make sure the *purpose* and the *desired reader response* of the email is clear
- edit and delete words, sentences, and paragraphs that do not contribute to the desired result
- check for potential ambiguities and unclear thinking
- rephrase sentences for clarity by using fewer words
- check the level of detail for the readers
- edit for plain language
- perform a final scan of the email before hitting "*Send*".

## **10. Practice good email etiquette**

Business emails should be brief, positive and professional:

- be careful not to send "burning" emails. Before you hit the *Send* key, you may want to wait and cool off
- when you hit the *Reply* button, modify the subject line and delete unnecessary information. The reader then sees relevant content quickly and saves them time
- include your Unitec styled signature; automatically including your name and contact information makes it convenient for readers to contact you
- resist the urge to hit the *Reply All* button – see Golden Rule 3
- use correct sentence capitalisation and grammar eg, Use a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence.
- omit jokes, sarcasm, emoticons or other unnecessary graphics.