Tips for Writing Business Emails

1. Before starting any new message, ask the following question: Why am I writing this email and who needs to read it?

2. Selecting the audience:
   a. To line – think of individuals who are in direct conversation with the sender and who are expected to respond to the message.
   b. CC line – think of individuals who should be aware of the conversation and what is being shared. Strategically select the people to carbon copy on emails. The people in this line should have a clear business purpose for being included in the email, even though they are not expected to respond to the message.
   c. BCC line - be thoughtful when using the BCC line in email. Strategic uses for BCC include the sender copying themselves for filing purposes or sending information to large groups while protecting personal information.
   d. Reply all - rarely use it in email. Instead simply hit reply or forward the message to the specific audience who the sender wants to address.

3. Timing the email message:
   a. Be considerate of the recipient when it comes to the timing of the email message. If working at night, set a time for the message to be sent during normal business hours.
   b. Respect colleagues’ time away from the office. Try to avoid sending direct messages to people who are away for personal reasons unless absolutely necessary.
   c. Give people a reasonable amount of time to respond to the message. If a quick response is needed, make sure to indicate this in the subject line.

4. Choosing a subject line for the email:
   a. A thoughtful subject line is important as it helps readers prioritize their emails.
   b. Tips for subject lines that get attention:
      i. Summarize the content (and needs) of the message in the subject line.
      ii. Specify any required action in the subject line, including any deadlines.
      iii. Keep subject lines short - provide enough detail to show what to expect.

5. Tips for the sender to help email readers communicate with them comfortably:
   a. Include preferred pronouns.
   b. Spell out their name phonetically.
   c. Sign the email with their preferred name and preferred title.
   d. Go neutral on gender for others and write out their whole name in the greeting.

6. As emails may be forwarded to others, always edit emails and consider these tips:
   a. Be aware that drafting emails from a phone may lead to more typos.
   b. Double-check the spelling of names.
   c. Reread the message, and read it aloud if possible.
   d. Double-check words with multiple spellings, such as there/their/they’re or too/to/two.

7. Keep the following grammar tips in mind:
   a. Use the Oxford comma. This means when there are three or more details in a list, use a comma before the conjunction. Example: This screen has pink, purple, and gray circles on it. The Oxford comma is placed after the word purple. Using it makes it easy for the reader to quickly understand the meaning of the message, without it, it is less clear.
   b. Write active sentences. But, strategically use passive voice when it makes sense.
c. Avoid excessive punctuation. One exclamation point should be used for emphasis.

d. Maintain parallel structure in lists – so that every item on the list starts in the same way.

e. Keep it simple. Never use 25 words when 15 will do. Cut the clutter to be clearer.

8. Keep emails straightforward using these tips:
   a. Use clear and simple language.
   b. Avoid clichés, jargon, and buzzwords.
   c. Use contractions, as they are consistent with everyday speech.
   d. Read the message out loud. If it does not sound normal as if talking, make changes.

9. These tips can help format emails in a reader-friendly manner:
   a. Avoid all caps, as it comes across as hostile and it is harder to catch errors and typos.
   b. Highlight responses in yellow and then use italics or bold to catch a reader’s attention. 
      Don’t use red font as it can be read as hostile and can have different meanings in other 
      cultures. Also, using blue or green text might be hard to read for someone who’s 
      colorblind, and these colors don’t always show up on mobile devices.
   c. Keep sentences and paragraphs short and inform readers what they need to know. Use 
      bulleted lists when content must be long, as this is easier to read on a variety of devices.
   d. Consider sending a separate message if all the content in the message is not related as 
      this can help readers stay focused on the key topic of the message. If the content is kept 
      together in one email, use bold subject headings to break up the sections or paragraphs.

10. Here are tips to strike the right tone in emails to avoid misunderstanding from lack of context:
    a. Don’t use sarcasm and jokes. Emails can end up anywhere and be read by anyone.
    b. Don’t assume familiarity; establish working relationships before using an informal tone.
    c. Don’t assume the gender of the recipient. Include the person’s whole name instead.

11. Phrases to avoid in email:
    a. “Per our conversation” or “Per my last email,” which may be read as chastising.
    b. “Simply stated” or “to put it simply” may imply the person has trouble understanding.
    c. “I’m not sure if you received my last message.” This calls out a lack of response.
    d. “Just checking in.” This shows impatience for a lack of response – be direct instead. If an 
       updated is needed, say that. If the original email provided when a response was needed, 
       try calling the recipient, sending an instant message, or setting up a meeting.
    e. “Thanks in advance” may come across as pushy or assumes the request will be granted.

12. Other things to avoid in email:
    a. Sending unimportant messages as high-priority.
    b. Failing to update an out-of-office message or failing to turn it off once back.
    c. Listing too much information in email signatures.
    d. Forgetting attachments.
    e. Sending large files. Instead, save large files to a cloud and include the link.
    f. Labeling attachments unclearly. Instead, give descriptive names and list as referenced.
    g. Forwarding messages without reading everything.
    h. Responding to messages without reading the entire chain.
    i. Using text-speak in business emails. Emails may be read by others in the future.

13. Remember, people read messages on a variety of devices. Always use clear and direct language 
    in email communications, and do not include anything that could not be read by everyone later.