

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EMAIL



Email messages are generally less formal than letters, but there are still certain expectations for appropriate and successful email communication with faculty, colleagues and other professionals. **Critical points to remember:**

- In academic email, de-emphasize the conversational aspect.
- Use of polite terms and apologies doesn't guarantee a polite tone; until you are experienced, have someone (preferably a native speaker) check it for you.
- Keep messages as concise as possible: leave out personal details.
- Do not send large attachments unless asked.
- Learn to recognize cues from the person you're writing to determine the level of formality.
- Use your university email account for academic and professional correspondence.

Names

If you don't know a professor — Professor Jane Doe, for example — address her as “Professor Doe” (title + **last name**) until she writes back with a signature that gives you a clue to how you can address her. If she signs her response to you with “Jane Doe,” you probably need to stay with a more formal approach and use “Professor Doe.” If she writes back using “Jane,” she can (and should) be addressed in the future as “Jane.”

Formality

We may speak using the words *gonna* and *wanna*, but we don't write them unless we are reporting speech or dialect. We also avoid most abbreviations, emoticons (“smileys”), exaggerated punctuation, and IM and text messaging shortcuts.

Requests

It is important to be polite when you are asking someone to help you. Some suggested phrases:

Would you be so kind as to...

I hope you might be willing to..

When convenient for you, could you please...

I would be most grateful if you...

Format

- SUBJECT line: concise but descriptive
- Start with [Dear] Prof. Doe,
- End with Best regards, Regards, Sincerely, Best, Thank you
- Use your full name (English order) in the closing of your first message
- Proofread and spell-check (spelling errors are considered lazy and unprofessional)

Personal note: After the first week or so of class omit identifying yourself (I am a student in your FLE XXX class). This implies that I don't know who my students are.

Analyze the following email messages sent from students to [Prof. Janet Maceda](#):

1. Sorry to bother you. Right now, I am working on my master's prospectus. I'm really stressed because it's due in two days and my English is so bad. Could you please read it and give me your comments by tomorrow? Thanks a lot!!
2. Hi Janet,
I am sorry I missed class. I was too tired to attend, so I went back and had a sound sleep to recharge myself. Is it possible for you to email me any handouts or to bring them with you to class, next time? Or, let me know when you will be available tomorrow, so that I can pick up my papers.
3. Hey,
Sorry for sending my homework late, but my internet was not working yesterday. It's fixed now.
4. Dear Professor Janet Maceda,
I called you several times today and left you voice messages. Yesterday I went to the bookstore but I could not find the course textbook. Could you please let me know where I can find it?
5. Dear Professor,
I have something to do so I cannot come to see you. Sorry for telling you that.
6. Dear Janet, I am sorry to bother you. My professor insists that I see you to improve my paper. I would like to have English assistance either tomorrow or Thursday morning. Please let me know what is a good time for you.
7. Dear Maceda,
Thank you so much for your email! I apologize sincerely for my behavior! I wanna meet you on Monday at 8:30-9:00. Please let me know your phone number!
8. Dear Janet,
I took part in the graduate student campout this weekend and came back this weekend. I felt so tired. Though I am trying my best, I am still afraid that my homework will not be finished. So I want to know if I can hand it in tomorrow? Thank you.
9. Professor Janet,
I am very sorry but I plan to drop your class. I do not know whether it is okay. Could you please tell me the rules about this ASAP? Thank you very much!
10. Hi Janet
How are you doing? Here is my homework for Monday's class. It's attached to this email. BTW, I caught a terrible virus: coughing, vomiting and feeling feverish. I'll try to go to class, but if you don't see me, I am in bed.
11. Hi Maceda,
I cannot open the homework file on my computer. What should I do?
12. Hi Nancy Swisher,

I've come to U.S. for only 3 months, and I think I can't communicate with my classmates very well, cuz nearly all of them are in-state student. So, I'm wondering whether I should take a English class to improve. Can I talk to u directly and audit one of your classes recently?

As u said, can we meet at this Wednesday(11/13) on 4:30pm? And where's ur office? Is it in Winston Hall?

13. Dear Teacher,
Sorry I missed class today. Did you do anything important?

14. Dear Ms. Swisher,
I submitted my assignment yesterday but I have not received any feedback from you.
Instructor's note: assignment submitted 3:37 pm on Sunday. Inquiry about no feedback sent 4:50 pm Monday (a holiday).