

EMAIL REFERENCE GUIDE: TIPS AND COMMON PITFALLS

BETTER EMAIL WRITING TIPS:	COMMON PITFALLS:
1. Use short paragraphs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep paragraphs short and focused on one idea (2-4 sentences per paragraph is a good rule of thumb). You can also use bullets to organize separate points! 	1. Write more than you need to in order to convey your message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read your email all the way through before sending and ask “is this necessary?” or “what does this add?”
2. Write clearly and concisely <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We failed to repair the old air conditioner in the visitor’s center. Please locate Bill and send him to us as soon as possible, and ask him to bring his toolkit.</i> 	2. Use jargon, unclear, or unnecessarily big words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We totally frackjawed the repair on the old LP4000! Go get Bill n shivs ASAP!</i> (Note that both examples could also be text messages- ah the age of pocket computers)
3. Use active verbs (subject—verb—object) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>As a quick reminder, tomorrow we have communications training in meeting room 4 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM.</i> 	3. Use passive verbs (object—verb—subject) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In meeting room 4, from 9 to noon tomorrow is where communications training will be provided for us.</i>
4. Write with warmth, from one human to another <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I appreciate you sending the reminder. I will see you tomorrow for the training at 9 in room 4.</i> 	4. Use terms that come across as condescending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Of course the training is tomorrow from 9 to noon. (“Of course” sounds a lot like “any idiot would know”)</i>
5. Use strong clear statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sharon, can you deliver the proposal to my office before 5pm tomorrow please? Thank you,</i> 	5. Use wishy-washy words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sharon, I kinda need the proposal tomorrow by 5pm. Thank you,</i> <i>The proposal is rather important</i>
6. Be precise and specific when making statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Customer satisfaction dropped by 10% last quarter, although right now we do not know why.</i> 	6. Be vague or leave anything open to interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Customer satisfaction was affected by 10%, but we don’t know why. (Affected how? What direction?)</i>
7. Keep your audience in mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Dr. Jones, Thank you for agreeing to come to the zoo to give a lecture on the migration patterns of salmon. We are looking forward to hosting you!</i> 	7. Write to everyone in the same fashion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hey Janice, Thanks for taking us up on the offer to give a talk about salmon migrations! Lookin forward ☺</i>
8. Write every word completely <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>That was funny!</i> 	8. Use abbreviations for anything <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I’m ROTFLOing!!</i>
9. Pay attention to tone (emotion is ok, just don’t “yell”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I feel very excited about the new project!</i> 	9. Use over-capitalization and over-punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I AM SOOOO EXCITED ABOUT THE NEW PROJECT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!</i>
10. Write short, informative subject lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject: <i>Request for information regarding winter hours</i> Subject: <i>Idea for the next employee newsletter</i> 	10. Write one-word or unclear subject lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject: <i>Hours...</i> Subject: <i>I think we should do a brief bio and interview of our CEO next month in the newsletter</i>
11. Re-read your email out loud before sending it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you think that you’ll sound crazy, go to a private room or “lip read” it 	11. Write and send an email when angry or upset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are angry, it’s ok to write up an email, but do not send it for 24 hours and until you’ve had a chance to read it again
12. Check for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar	12. Hit send the moment you finish typing
13. Always put requests for action at the end of the email and make sure they are clear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you please stop by before 4pm? 	13. Bury requests in the middle of a paragraph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blah blah, can you meet? Blah blah.