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E-mail etiquette do's and don'ts



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In *E-Mail: A Write It Well Guide*, author [Janis Fisher Chan](#) gives practical tips about how to avoid [e-mail](#) faux pas like the ones we hear about all the [time](#). Some do's and don'ts that she addresses include:

- Do think about what you've [written](#) before you send your e-mail. A little attention to what we [say](#) now can save us a lot of [grief](#) later, but too often we hit send before thinking our [message](#) through. "We do that all the time. You fire off an e-mail and you don't think about your tone, you don't think about your language, and you don't think much about the person on the other end at all," Chan told me during an [interview](#). "You just want to get the e-mail off and go on with your business."
- Don't get caught up in e-mail [arguments](#), and other back-and-forth exchanges, on an issue when it's not going anywhere. Likewise, don't send unnecessary e-mails, such as multiple messages [thanking](#) someone or apologizing to them.
- Do proofread your e-mails before you send them out. Messages sent to colleagues with errors make you look careless and unprofessional.
- Don't copy everyone under the sun on an e-mail. You make think that your message is interesting to everyone you CC, but make sure that it's really relevant for them. It's best to only copy people on e-mails who need the information you are sending.
- Do remember that e-mail is public and permanent. You may think that the sweet nothings you write to your office [romance](#) are for their eyes only, or that the [boss](#) will never find out about the e-mailed rant to your [BFF](#), but you may learn the hard way that your private thoughts can easily be made public. Any number of circumstances—like accidental forwards of your message or monitoring by your employer—can give your e-mail a much longer shelf-life than you intended.

This article originally appeared on my [Workplace Communication Examiner](#) page on July 3, 2009.

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Posted by Kenya McCullum at November 24, 2010

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