

TIPS FOR EMAIL ETIQUETTE

1. **CAPITAL LETTERS EQUAL SHOUTING.** Use upper/lower case writing. If you must emphasize something, use caps for that short phrase, or better yet -- set it off by using asterisks before and after: *like this section is illustrated*
2. **Don't engage in "flame wars."** (Becoming abusive with someone, or engaging in "flame throwing," via email.) Writing doesn't get interpreted in the same way that oral communication does -- therefore, choose your words carefully. If you have something to say that's going to raise ire, do it by phone or better yet, in person.
3. **Be careful of what you write on email.** Remember that email communication can be read by others, and that you need real clarity, as well as sensitivity, in writing. A good rule of thumb, if you're writing something that needs either precision or sensitivity, is to write it, and then go back after a short break and re-read it BEFORE you send it out. Once it's gone, it's gone...and you may regret a hasty move!
4. **Email is for brief, to-the-point communication.** However, that doesn't mean your message has to go out filled with misspelled words or major grammatical errors. A quick proofreading and spell-check can ensure that your message reflects the professionalism you and your organization expect in written communications.
5. **Even though the transmission is immediate, your response doesn't have to be.** Email is great -- it's quick, it's easy -- but don't fall into the trap of thinking that you must respond "instantly" without carefully considering your response. A response on urgent issues is expected; other matters deserve your consideration and a timely response within 24 hours is entirely acceptable.
6. **Don't copy the world on your messages.** How many messages have you received where the 'cc' list is as long as your screen? Choose recipients of your messages carefully and considerately. You don't like junk mail, and neither will the recipients of your messages, if what you've sent doesn't really concern them.
7. **Reply to intended list member.** Email lists are wonderful for prompt delivery of information. Don't use these lists for one-on-one discussions. Instead, if you and Member X are trying to arrange a coffee date, reply directly to Member X. Not all subscribers need to know about these arrangements -- and not all email lists are designed to automatically reply only to the sender.
8. **Reply to sender.** We have all probably forwarded messages with a request for the "forwarded" to respond to a particular message. If you receive such a forward, make sure you do, indeed, reply to the sender of the original message. Hitting the reply button will send your response back to the person who *forwarded* you the message.

9. **Respect message privacy.** Email users understand that there is no such thing as a private email message. But before forwarding a message, ask yourself if the sender would mind it being forwarded. If in doubt, ask the sender.
10. **Formatting gets lost in email text.** If you are sending text within your message that is intended to be cut and pasted by the recipient, leave out formatting. Attaching the text as a saved document gives you a much better chance to preserve formatting.
11. **Don't forward chain letters or "hoax" messages** - particularly "virus warning" messages and other "urban legends." They are almost always fabricated, and get inexperienced email users on edge while cluttering up mailboxes. For more information, see <http://www.uua.org/CONG/websters.html#hoaxes>
12. **Save the messages that matter in electronic form.** Don't print out every message you receive. Use your computer like your filing cabinet, and create files to store the messages that matter, so they can be brought up without thumbing through hard copies of all correspondence. It's efficient, quick, and it kills fewer trees! However...
13. **Back up your files frequently.** This is important. If you have much stored, invest in a zip drive to cut backup time.

*With **grateful** appreciation to Debbie Weiner, Director of Electronic Communication at the Unitarian Universalist Association, for allowing me to share (and amend!) her March 2000 "Mysteries of Electronic Communication Revealed! A Short Course in Netiquette."*

*Diane Brinson
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Always remember...
Read your email message before you click the "send" button.

**From the *Interconnections* archives:
www.uua.org/interconnections/search.html**

Danger: Difficult Issues And E-Mail Don't Mix

Use caution when discussing congregational issues on e-mail, reminds the Rev. Bob Hill, district executive for the UUA's Southwest District.

"E-mail is wonderful," Hill says. "But it's also a terrible way to discuss difficult issues.

"Please, please, please, whether you are a minister or a lay leader or a loyal critic, do not use e-mail as a forum for dealing with complicated church issues or as a means of gathering support for one side or another of a controversy."

"I have assisted with more than one situation in which e-mail messages made problems worse than they had to be. E-mail has these dangerous qualities:

- E-mail gives a false sense of conversation . . . without the help of non-verbal signals: voice tone, facial expression, body language, and so on.
- E-mail lets you react almost instantly. I don't know about you, but often my second thoughts are a lot wiser than my first reactions.
- E-mail messages are available to everyone in the world. They can be forwarded, accidentally or on purpose, to anyone who is on-line. Say nothing in e-mail you wouldn't be willing for everyone to read.
- E-mail messages are immortal. Any message you send about a church controversy today may be plucked from someone's hard drive, zip disk, or CD next week, next year, or 10 years from now and quoted totally out of context.

"I'm not urging you to refrain from criticizing what needs criticism or to hold back your opinions about any legitimate concern of church life. Sometimes needed change can come about only through struggle and difficulties."