How to Use Email Effectively

Email is a major form of communication in our work, yet we receive limited training on how to use email effectively. Use these guidelines to improve email communication in your work.

Email Best Pratices

I. Include a brief signature block that includes pronouns, title & contact number. Example: *Rae Johnson | Community Support Specialist, Thresholds Youth & Young Adult Services Pronouns: they/them | Work cell: 832-440-6211*

II. Choose an easy to read font type + size and stay consistent. Utilize the default email fonts. Be careful when copying and pasting that fonts stay consistent.

III. Don't write anything that you would not want everyone to see. Do not put private or confidential information in emails. Be mindful of emotional and angry emails. Consult with your supervisor or colleague first to determine the best way to communicate if you are unsure.

IV. Use the autoreply function when you are out of office or unavailable. You can create autoreplies that say: "I will return your email when I am back in the office on ____ (date). However, if you have an urgent need, please contact _____ (colleague name + contact info).
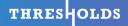
V. Keep your email message short and to the point. Make sure that your intent and "ask" are clear. The reader should know why you are sending the email and your email should result in acknowledgment & action. Include one line in bold that highlights your ask. Use bullet points to break up info. If your email is long, consider scheduling a meeting or picking up the phone.

Checking & Responding to Emails:

I. Respond to email in a timely fashion. Know who you need to respond to immediately (e.g., company executive), and who can wait 24-hours for a response. Ask your supervisor what email expectations are. Schedule 2-3 times daily for checking and responding to email.

II. Install your email app(s) on your smartphone. This will improve your email responsiveness. Silence new email notifications during non-work hours. Change your phone app email signature to match your signature of your desktop email and remove any "from phone…" statements.

III. Briefly acknowledge emails. If you get an email from an individual asking you to do a task that will take time to complete, respond that you are on it, and will follow-up with questions.

Tips for Replying

I. Think twice about "reply all." Use when appropriate. Do NOT "reply all" to full company emails (e.g., from CEO announcing policy change) or list serves. However, make sure that you are "relying all" when important to do so. For instance, when your team is discussing a case or project – and everyone is adding their thoughts to the email chain.

II. Label your attachments, & group them into a compressed folder when necessary. Make sure attachments are properly labeled so recipients know what they are opening up to review. Consider zipping files or sending a folder location if more than two attachments are needed.

III. CC appropriately. CC when you want to make someone aware of a message, but you do not expect them to respond. Examples: (1) when you want colleague(s) or supervisor to see the email, (2) to keep people updated, (3), to make email a higher priority for the recipient because you've copied someone higher up in company, or (4) to keep an out-of-office colleague in the loop upon their return. Avoid using BCC unless sending an email to many recipients and you want to avoid recipients replying all, and clogging in-boxes.

I**V. Forward emails correctly. Add a small note saying "FYI" or "See below."** Review what you are forwarding for any sensitive or confidential information. If forwarding a lengthy email chain, tell recipient where to look for the info. You might even highlight the relevant parts for them.

V. Don't take not getting a prompt email response personally. Politely follow-up with individuals who you have sent an email to, especially if urgent.

Before you hit send:

I. Include a clear, direct subject line. Keep it short, 5 words or less. The entire subject line should be visible for recipient to read. Use direct language to share email purpose and needed response date. For example, *Due 3.28.2022_BLANK document for your review*.

II. Use a proper opener & closer. Include a "Hi" or "Hello" + the name of who you are emailing. Keep your email closing friendly & brief. "Thanks!" "Best." "Stay tuned."

III. Proofread subject line & email content. Double check that you have the correct recipient. (AKA: Do you have the right Mark or Annie?) Ensure names and pronouns used in your email are correct. Use the spell check function. It's there to help you!

IV. Are there any sentences that you could remove? (e.g., the backstory or the "why"). If you find yourself writing more than 1 sentence of backstory, pick up the phone or schedule a meeting so you can explain the back story.

V. Check tone. Avoid sarcasm. Frame your email using positive words (e.g., benefit, improvement) instead of negative words (failure, mistake).