

# Quick Tips on Writing a Professional Email

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## 1. SUBJECT LINE

- a. Always fill in the subject line with a topic that means something to your reader (a blank subject line is unacceptable). Don't just put "Read this", but "Request for meeting regarding research interests", or simply "Meeting Request".

## 2. SALUTATION

- a. Never start a professional email with "Hey" or "Hi". Think of the professor as a potential employer. Always refer to a professor as "Dr. \_\_\_\_\_" or "Professor" if you aren't sure.

## 3. OPENING SENTENCE

- a. Put your main point in the opening sentence. The first paragraph should be about who you are and why you are sending the email. An e-mail shouldn't sound like an episode of *Lost*.

## 4. BODY

- a. Don't beat around the bush. The second paragraph should contain the information you are providing or the request you are making. State the desired follow through of the situation (i.e. meeting in person to discuss working together).

## 5. GENERAL INFO

- a. Don't use ALL CAPITALS (no shouting!) or all lower-case letters either (unless you're e. e. cummings).
- b. As a general rule, PLZ avoid email abbreviations and chat room acronyms: *you* may be ROFLOL (rolling on the floor laughing out loud), but your reader may be left wondering WUWT (what's up with that).
- c. Be brief *and* polite. Remember to say "please" and "thank you." And mean it. If your message runs longer than two or three short paragraphs, consider (a) reducing the message, or (b) providing an attachment. But in any case, don't snap, growl, or bark.

## 6. CLOSING

- a. Provide a closing statement. Courtesy is always important, no matter how short or long the email.
- b. Add a signature block with appropriate contact information. In most cases, this means your name, business address, and phone number. Do you *need* to clutter the signature block with a clever quotation and artwork? Probably not.

## 7. RESUME

- a. If there are any attachments, mention them in the email so that the receiver knows to look for and open the files. Also, appropriately name the attachments so that the receiver knows what each document is just by looking at the name.

**DON'T FORGET TO *PROOFREAD* BEFORE HITTING "SEND."**

### EXAMPLE 1:

Dear Professor Smith,

My name is Katherine Jones; I am a sophomore in Chemical Engineering. I am especially interested in fluid mechanics, and I recently came across the article you just published in *Northeastern Fluids*. I found your research on fluid particle behavior extremely fascinating, and I am writing to ask whether you have any openings in your lab. My senior year of high school, I worked in Professor Martin Min's catalysis lab at University of Michigan (my resume is attached), and so I understand the skills required to work in a ChemE lab.

If you have time, I would love to meet with you or one of your graduate students to discuss any openings. I can be reached via email or at (215) – 898 – 1234; please let me know what time is most convenient for you. Thank you very much for the consideration.

Sincerely,  
Katie Jones

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### EXAMPLE 2:

Greetings Dr. \*\*\*\* \*\*\*,

My name is Melanie Fisher. I'm a McNair Scholar from Columbia and a student in the Honors College majoring in Spanish, minoring in French, and completing USC's Foreign Language Education Certification Program.

Needless to say, I have always been interested in the ways that languages bridge gaps between people, and hinder or help their quality of life and relationships. Recently, I became interested in Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology as an option for Graduate School.

I'm very interested in getting research experience, and when I used USC's Office of Undergraduate Research to look further into COMD research, your professional profile caught my eye because I believe that early childhood is often the most helpful time to diagnose and treat a language disorder, and also because I love working with children!

I'm interested in learning more about your research; would you have some time to meet with me so that I can learn more about it? I am available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and am happy to meet at your convenience.

If you are not able to meet with me, could you suggest someone who is doing similar work and might have some opportunities available? Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Fisher