

Module : TCE

Class : 1st year

What is email?

Electronic mail, commonly shortened to “email,” is a communication method that uses electronic devices to deliver messages across computer networks. "Email" refers to both the delivery system and individual messages that are sent and received.

Email has existed in some form since the 1970s, when programmer Ray Tomlinson created a way to transmit messages between computer systems on the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET). Modern forms of email became available for widespread public use with the development of email client software (e.g. Outlook) and web browsers, the latter of which enables users to send and receive messages over the Internet using web-based email clients (e.g. Gmail).

Today, email is one of the most popular methods of digital communication. Its prevalence and security vulnerabilities also make it an appealing vehicle for cyber attacks like [phishing](#), [domain spoofing](#), and [business email compromise \(BEC\)](#).

How does email work?

Email messages are sent from software programs and web browsers, collectively referred to as email ‘clients.’ Individual messages are routed through multiple servers before they reach the recipient’s email server, similar to the way a traditional letter might travel through several post offices before it reaches its recipient’s mailbox.

Once an email message has been sent, it follows several steps to its final destination:

1. The sender’s mail server, also called a Mail Transfer Agent (MTA), initiates a [Simple Mail Transfer Protocol \(SMTP\)](#) connection.
2. The SMTP checks the email envelope data — the text that tells the server where to send a message — for the recipient’s email address, then uses the [Domain Name System \(DNS\)](#) to translate the domain name into an IP address.
3. The SMTP looks for a [mail exchange \(MX\)](#) server associated with the recipient’s domain name. If one exists, the email is forwarded to the recipient’s mail server.
4. The email is stored on the recipient’s mail server and may be accessed via the Post Office Protocol (POP)* or [Internet Message Access Protocol \(IMAP\)](#). These two protocols function slightly differently: POP downloads the email to the recipient’s

device and deletes it from the mail server, while IMAP stores the email within the email client, allowing the recipient to access it from any connected device.

To continue the postal system analogy, imagine Alice writes a thank-you note to Bob. She hands the letter to the mail carrier (MTA), who brings it to the post office to be sorted. At the post office, a processing clerk (SMTP) verifies the address written on the envelope. If the address appears to be written correctly and corresponds to a location that can receive mail (MX server), another mail carrier delivers the letter to Bob's mailbox. After picking up the mail, Bob might keep the note in his desk drawer, where he can only access it at that location (POP) or put it in his pocket to read at any location (IMAP).

**The current version of the POP protocol is named POP3.*

What are the parts of an email?

An individual email is made up of three primary components: the SMTP envelope, the header, and the body.

Header

Like the SMTP envelope, the email header provides critical information about the sender and recipient. Most of the time, the header matches the information provided in the SMTP envelope, but this may not always be the case. For instance, a scammer may disguise the source of a message by using a legitimate email address in the header of an email. Because the recipient only sees the header and body of an email — not the envelope data — they may not know the message is malicious.

The header may also contain a number of optional fields that allow the recipient to reply to, forward, categorize, archive, or delete the email. Other header fields include the following:

- o The **'Date'** field contains the date the email is sent. This is a mandatory header field.
- o The **'From'** field contains the email address of the sender. If the email address is associated with a display name, that may be shown in this field as well. This is also a mandatory header field.
- o The **'To'** field contains the email address of the recipient. If the email address is associated with a display name, that may be shown in this field as well.

- o The **'Subject'** field contains any contextual information about the message the sender wants to include. It is displayed as a separate line above the body of an email.
- o The **'Cc' (carbon copy)** field allows the sender to send a copy of the email to additional recipients. The recipients marked in the 'To' field can see the email address(es) listed in the 'Cc' field.
- o The **'Bcc' (blind carbon copy)** field allows the sender to send a copy of the email to additional recipients. The recipients marked in the 'To' field cannot see the email address(es) listed in the 'Bcc' field.

Body

The body of an email contains any information the sender wishes to send: text, images, links, videos, and/or other [file attachments](#), provided that they do not exceed the email client's size restrictions. Alternatively, an email can be sent without any information in the body field.

Depending on the options provided by the email client, the body of an email can be formatted in plain text or HTML. Plain text emails do not contain any special formatting (like non-black font colors) or multimedia (like images). They are compatible with all devices and email clients. HTML emails *do* allow formatting and multimedia within the body field, though some HTML elements may get flagged as spam by email filtering systems or may not display properly on incompatible devices or clients.

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1. Begin with a greeting

Always open your email with a greeting, such as **"Dear Lillian"**. If your relationship with the reader is formal, use their family name (eg. **"Dear Mrs. Price"**). If the relationship is more casual, you can simply say, **"Hi Kelly"**. If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, use: **"To whom it may concern"** or **"Dear Sir/Madam"**.

2. Thank the recipient

If you are replying to a client's inquiry, you should begin with a line of thanks. For example, if someone has a question about your company, you can say, **"Thank you for contacting ABC Company"**. If someone has replied to one of your emails, be sure to say, **"Thank you for your prompt**

reply” or **“Thanks for getting back to me”**. Thanking the reader puts him or her at ease, and it will make you appear more polite.

3. State your purpose

If you are starting the email communication, it may be impossible to include a line of thanks. Instead, begin by stating your purpose. For example, **“I am writing to enquire about ...”** or **“I am writing in reference to ...”**.

Make your purpose clear early on in the email, and then move into the main text of your email. Remember, people want to read emails quickly, so keep your sentences short and clear. You’ll also need to pay careful attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation so that you present a professional image of yourself and your company.

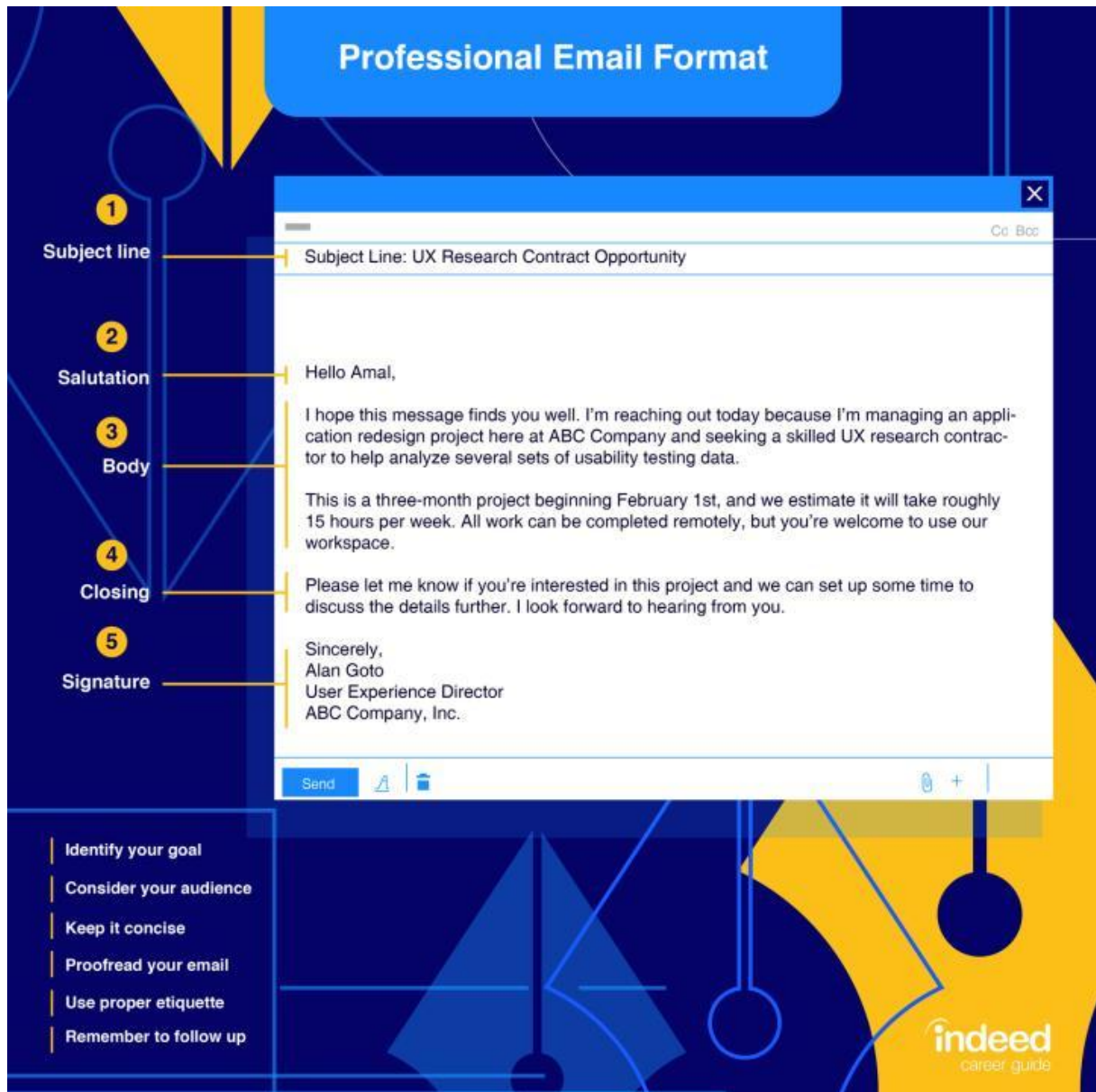
1. Add your closing remarks

Before you end your email, it’s polite to thank your reader one more time and add some polite closing remarks. You might start with **“Thank you for your patience and cooperation”** or **“Thank you for your consideration”** and then follow up with, **“If you have any questions or concerns, don’t hesitate to let me know”** and **“I look forward to hearing from you”**.

2. End with a closing

The last step is to include an appropriate closing with your name. **“Best regards”**, **“Sincerely”**, and **“Thank you”** are all professional. Avoid closings such as **“Best wishes”** or **“Cheers”** unless you are good friends with the reader. Finally, before you hit the send button, review and spell check your email one more time to make sure it’s truly perfect!

Aren’t you an EF English Live student yet? See the general and [business English course](#) in action by requesting a one month for only one dollar* trial. Find more information about essential professional English tips [here](#).



Examples of professional emails

Here are three examples of professional emails:

Writing an email to a new contact

Subject Line: UX Research Contract Opportunity

Hello Amal,

I hope this message finds you well. I'm reaching out today because I'm managing an application redesign project here at ABC Company and seeking a skilled UX research contractor to help analyze several sets of usability testing data.

This is a three-month project beginning February 1st, and we estimate it will take roughly 15 hours per week. All work can be completed remotely, but you're welcome to use our workspace.

Please let me know if you're interested in this project and we can set up some time to discuss the details further. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Writing an email to a group

Subject Line: Marketing Meeting Canceled

Hi team,

The marketing strategy meeting scheduled for this afternoon has been canceled.

I apologize for the late notice, but I know everyone will welcome the extra time back in their day. We will reconvene at our regularly scheduled time next Wednesday.

Thanks,

*Gretchen Van Buren
Senior Marketing Manager*

Writing a follow-up email

Subject Line: Re: Availability for Introductory Meeting

Hi Elizabeth,

I just wanted to check back in regarding the date for your meeting with Mr. Al-Jamil. Just let me know whether June 5 or June 6 works better for your schedule.

Thank you!

Adam Moore
Executive Assistant

What should be avoided in an email subject line?

When composing an email subject line, you'll want to keep it professional and concise. In a short phrase (but not too short), summarize your email's message to help the recipient(s) know what to expect from your message when they read (or glance) it in their inbox.

You don't want your email's subject line to be too short as to be vague, nor too long that the recipient won't be able to read it completely (or most of it) from their inbox.

Tips when writing an email

Here are some things to keep in mind when writing emails:

- **Identify your goal:** Before you write an email, ask yourself what you want the recipient to do after they've read it. Once you've determined the purpose of your email, you can ensure everything you include in your message supports this action.
- **Keep it concise:** Your audience might have little time to read your email, so make your message as brief as possible without leaving out key information. Try not to address too many subjects at once as this can make your message lengthy and difficult to take action on.
- **Use proper etiquette:** Include a courteous greeting and closing to sound friendly and polite. Additionally, be considerate of the recipient and their time. For example, unless it's an emergency, avoid emailing a contact asking for something after-hours or while they're on leave.