

E-mail Netiquette – How to Communicate Effectively with College Professors

“It only takes 4 seconds to make an impression.

Be remembered for your style of communication not your username.”

College students need to make a good impression to their professor in the classroom, when completing homework assignments, in presenting class projects, and performing on exams. Impressions are also being formed by professors when receiving an e-mail message from a student in their class. A college student must remember professors are not the same people as high school friends. An e-mail message sent to a professor should have a different tone and style than an e-mail message sent to a “bff”. Sentence structure, appropriate word choice, and sensible organization of an e-mail message must be taken into consideration prior to hitting the send button each and every time.

Suggestions for sending a professional e-mail which will be read and responded to:

Appropriate Username

- Creativity can and should be appreciated but what if one of your professors took attendance by reciting usernames and you had to raise your hand in front of other students in the class. Would you not acknowledge your presence in class and take the absence or could you say with pride “here”.
- Would you feel comfortable saying your username out loud in front of your mother, father, grandmother, etc. without being embarrassed or having a sense of shamefulness?
- Be remembered for the message you sent not your username
- Example - initials jlw@knights.ucf.edu



Subject Line - First and Last Name plus Course Name

- Identify yourself as a student in your professor’s class as oppose to being lumped into a list serve response, fellow professors, or a UCF announcement. Example - Jake Allison - SLS 1501
- Professors teach 4 classes, serve on committees, conduct research, and serve as advisors. They average 60 emails each day.

Greetings/Acknowledgements - Start the E-mail with a Sense of Respect

- Review course syllabus to determine prefix for professor’s name. If their name is given on the syllabus as Dan Jones and you are unable to determine what prefix to use, to be safe, use Dr. Jones.
- No matter how easy going you might perceive your professor to be, advise being cautious in starting a message with “Hey teach! What’s up?”
- A more appropriate start to an e-mail message could be something as simple but meaningful as “Hope your day is going well. Great class on Monday.”

The Message Itself – Be Specific and Present it in an Organized Manner

- Get to the point, the purpose of your e-mail. Try to avoid long stories and presenting of scenarios or situations you find need paragraphs to explain. Sometimes it is better to talk to your professor in person then via e-mail.
- Example “I need to clarify an aspect of the assignment due next week. Would you prefer the paper double spaced or single spaced?”
- If you must turn in a homework assignment via an actual e-mail message, present material in an organized manner using spacing and breaks if necessary. You want your homework to be organized and presented in a visually pleasing way for ease of reading.

Concluding the Message - End with Appreciation

- Examples “Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.” or “I appreciate you taking the time to consider my request.”
- Avoid using the latest trends in signing off – LOL, TTFN, Peace, etc. Just thank you will work every time.
- Finally, rewrite both first and last name, the course name and schedule such as, Jake Allison, SLS 1501, Monday & Wednesday 11:00 am – 12:15 pm.

Final Two Suggestions: Read the Message Out Loud & Hit Spell Check before Sending

E-mail Netiquette – Email Folders to Create in College

One folder for each class each semester - Any type of email communication from a professor about the course or a classmate about a project update should be saved as documentation until the final grade is posted.

Academic Advising – All email communication from your first year and college advisor should be saved for documentation purposes. Changes in major requirements, course substitutions, permission to receive an override, etc. are examples of email documentation worth saving.

Financial Aid & Scholarships – All email communication from the Office of Financial Assistance or emails received regarding opportunities to apply for scholarships should be saved. Information on Bright Futures, correspondence between you and a place for where you submitted an application for a scholarship, needs to be saved for potential reference again in the future.

Campus Involvement – Create a folder for the student organization you are a member of or the fraternity or sorority you recently joined, or the committee you are now a part of, etc. It is great practice to organize this material so you can demonstrate commitment and dedication. An email read and then acted upon in a timely manner is a form of commitment and dedication!

Finances – This is a different folder from financial aid and scholarships. Emails from landlords, the bank from which your car is financed, insurance companies, credit card companies, etc. If you are receiving such emails, then you should be responsible enough to take care of such correspondence when needed.

Kudos, Nice Job, Honors, Awards – If you receive a complimentary email from a professor regarding your work in class, on a project, paper, assignment, etc., SAVE IT. If you receive an email from an honor society informing you of your eligibility to join, SAVE IT (whether you join or not). You receive an invitation to attend a reception to recognize your academic or personal achievement, SAVE IT. These emails are documentation and proof of your success, SAVE THEM!

- ✓ Need to send an email to a professor asking for a letter of recommendation, explaining an absence from class, clarification on an assignment?
- ✓ Frustrated with the lack of response from others when you send an email?
- ✓ Want to be able to send emails that get the point across the first time and not involve so many back and forth conversations?



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