

Guide to E-mailing Your Professor

1. Offer your professor as much context as possible concerning your identity before jumping into the body of your e-mail.

Do:

- Send the e-mail from an address with your name in it.

Example:

BRBrown@ncsu.edu (last name, first and middle initials, college affiliation)

- Include the section number in the subject line (especially for very large lecture classes).
- Introduce yourself in the opening line of the e-mail.

Example: “This is Marie from your 2:00 Microbiology class. I sit in the second row to the left of the podium.” (This introduction helps a professor put your name with your face.)

Don't:

- Assume the professor knows who you are and/or what class you are in based on your e-mail address or first name only.

Example: HalfPikeChic893@yahoo.com (no identifying information)

Example: “This is Kevin.” (The professor is left to wonder Kevin who? From what class?)

2. State the main purpose of your e-mail in the subject line.

Do:

- Use the subject line to tell your professor something about what's coming.

Example: “I just added your class” or “Could I

Don't:

- Do not write a vague subject line such as “hi” or “question.”

please get the assignment
for next Wednesday?"

*This lets your professor know
whether your e-mail is time-
sensitive and whether he or she
will need any resources to answer
it.

3. Choose an appropriate greeting.

Do:

- “Hi/Hello
Professor/Ms./Mr.
_____”

Don't:

- Jump into the body of your e-mail without any greeting. Not using any greeting sounds too brusque.

4. Be short and to the point, but avoid IM abbreviations or “text speak” (ttyl, lol, etc.).

Do:

- Capitalize proper nouns and the first word of each sentence.
- Write in complete sentences and utilize appropriate end (and other) punctuation.
- Avoid unnecessary or colloquial abbreviations.

Example: lol, c u, k, ttyl

- Try to fit the text of your e-mail on one screen if possible.

Don't:

- “ms. K, thanks for the assignment class wuz kool today – ttyl – B”
- Consciously misspell words

5. Tone should be slightly more formal than your professor's tone.

Do:

- Be formal and polite.

Don't:

- Refer to a professor by his/her first name even if he or she signs his/her e-mails that way. (Unless he/she has given you expressive permission to use his/her first name).

6. Ask politely.**Do:**

- “Could you please e-mail me the page numbers of the next reading? Thanks!”

Don't

- “I need the assignment.”

7. Spell-check AND proofread what you've written.**Do:**

- Take a minute and re-read what you have written to make sure it makes sense, and you have not made any glaring errors.

Don't

- Hit “send” without reviewing your request and checking for typos. You want your e-mail to represent you in the best (and most respectful) light.

8. Sign your e-mail with your full name, course number, and meeting time.**Do:**

- John Doe
- ENG 101-008 MTTHF 8:05 a.m.
- Include your e-mail address as well, especially if you want the professor to e-mail you back at a different address.

Don't

- Simply close with your first name. Your instructor is likely to know and have taught or be teaching several “Ashley's” “Jennifer's,” and “John's.”

*This is especially important in large lecture sections.

9. Don't expect your professor to print out any attachments.

Do:	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you will be absent from class and want to make sure you've got an assignment in on time, you may of course e-mail it before the date and time of the class.• Acknowledge that you wanted the professor to know you completed the assignment on time and that you will bring a hard-copy of the assignment be his or her office or to the next class period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expect your professor to consider an e-mail version of the assignment the official turned in version (unless the instructor accepts electronic submissions). If the professor is expecting a hard copy, print it out to turn into him/her later.

10. When you get a reply from your professor, say thanks.

Do:	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hit "Reply" and say "Thanks.• Include another few lines letting the professor know that your issue has been resolved if appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignore your professor's reply, or refuse to acknowledge that you received it. Your professor wants to know that you have received his/her reply or the requested information and that the reply or information was helpful, especially if the information is time-sensitive or pertaining to an upcoming assignment.