

Formal E-mail Guidelines

If you're used to using email to catch up with friends, writing a formal e-mail might feel pretty foreign to you. It's not quite the same as writing a business letter, but it's definitely a huge step in that direction. Clarity, conciseness and being correct are the keys! To write a formal email, follow these guidelines:

New Message Your e-mail address should be a variation of your real name, not a username or nickname. Use periods, hyphens, or underscores to secure an e-mail address that's just your name, without extra numbers or letters, if you can.

To _____ Cc Bcc

Subject — Be concise and to the point. Recipient should identify subject matter quickly and unambiguously.

Dear _____, — Use the person's title (Mr. Mrs. Ms. or Dr.) with their last name, followed by a comma or a colon. If you don't know the name of the person you're writing to then use "Dear Sir or Madam" followed by a colon. If you are not sure if the female is married or not, then use "Ms."

Thank you for agreeing to be my mentor! After reading your profile information, I am most excited about this opportunity and look forward to meeting and interacting with you.

Career Services suggests that our first step is to talk over the phone, via SKYPE or in person and go over any questions of concerns we may have plus decide our next agenda item. Please let me know when it is convenient for you to do so. If you prefer me set this time up through someone in your office, please let me know to whom I should contact.

Thank you again for agreeing to be my mentor. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely, _____

Your Name

Including first name alone or first and last name is dependent on formality level in the message. For first time contacts you can include your last name, but in subsequent communications that isn't necessary.

There are a variety of other closings you can use depending on the context of the e-mail. Some popular ones are:

- Best,
- Cordially,
- Regards,

You can use phrases as well:

- Have a great day!
- Thank you!
- Looking forward to your reply

Choose a sign-off that is indicative of the overall tone and demeanor of your e-mail to ensure the message is received as intended without any misunderstandings.

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The method of thanking can be a note, face-to-face, phone, or email...

- First time meetings, especially at a lunch or dinner, usually call for a handwritten note. Unless you know the person is from an email culture.



- When in doubt, choose the note. A prompt, sincere, handwritten one is always appropriate and is greatly appreciated by the recipient. It's also good business.



- Be sure to check spelling and grammar. If your handwriting is illegible, a printed note on your business stationery is fine.
- An emailed thank-you may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances. The person and your relationship. Again, defer to the handwritten note if you're in doubt.