

Email Netiquette: How to Communicate Effectively with College Professors

“It only takes 4 seconds to make an impression.”

College students need to make a good impression to their professors in the classroom, when completing homework assignments, presenting projects, and performing on exams. This also applies to your email communication. College students must remember that your professor is not a friend that you are emailing; it is the person who will be recording a final grade at the end of the semester. Grammar and sentence structure, appropriate word choice, and sensible organization of one’s email must be taken into consideration each and every time prior to hitting the send button.

Use your official Mt. SAC email account (@student.mtsac.edu)

- ☒ This lets a professor know who is sending the email. Do not forget to sign your name.
- ☒ Emails from unofficial addresses might be ignored, deleted, or spammed without being read.

Subject Line: First and last name plus course name and course reference number (CRN)

- ☒ Identify yourself as a student in your professor’s class.
Example: Joe Mountie - COUN 1/CRN 42944
- ☒ Instructors who teach 3-4 classes, serve on committees, and conduct research receive many emails every day, so it helps both you and your professors if they can quickly see that the message is about the class.

Greetings/Acknowledgements: Start the e-mail with a sense of respect

- ☒ Before beginning the e-mail, review your course syllabus to determine the appropriate prefix for a professor’s name. If the name is given on the syllabus as “Dan Jones” and you are unable to determine what prefix to use, use “Professor Jones” to be safe. Also, check to see if the question you are asking is answered in the syllabus.
- ☒ No matter how easy-going you perceive your professor to be, never start a message with “Hey teach!” or any type of informal greeting.
- ☒ 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 of your e-mail.
Example: “I need to clarify an aspect of the assignment due next week. Would you prefer the paper be double spaced or single spaced?”
- ☒ If you cannot leave out long stories, scenarios, or situations that you find need paragraphs to explain, it might be more appropriate to make an appointment to talk to your professor in person during office hours rather than over email.

Concluding the Message: End with appreciation

- ☒ *Examples:*
 - *“Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.”*
 - *“I appreciate you taking the time to consider my request.”*
- ☒ Do not use slang or IM/texting abbreviations such as LOL, TTYL, or “Peace Out!”. “Thank you” is appropriate.
- ☒ Finally, close with your first and last name, the course name and schedule such as:
Joe Mountie, Engl 1A/CRN 42244, MW, 4:30-6:35 pm

Final Suggestions

- ☒ **BEFORE SENDING:** *Always read the message out loud and run a spellcheck.*
- ☒ **AFTER SENDING:** *Do not expect replies to come instantly, after hours or on weekends/holidays.*

EXAMPLES

Good Email:

*Hi Professor Grand,
This is Joe Mountie and I have your class tomorrow at 4:30pm. I just completed the online quiz and when it was about to give me a confirmation, the internet shut down on me. I just wanted to make sure that it went through.
Thanks,*

*Joe Mountie,
Engl 1A/CRN 42244, MW, 4:30-6:35 pm*

What the student did **right**:

The student identifies himself and what class he is in. The student quickly and specifically identifies his problem. The student also uses a greeting and a conclusion.

Bad Email:

Dr. temple, i was wandering how i recieved a bad grade in your english 68 class. I believed i was doing fairly well in there. Is there any way u can explain to me how this happend?

What the student did **wrong**:

Especially because this email is to an English faculty member, careful attention needs to be paid to grammar and spelling. The student also uses informal “texting” language (“u” instead of “you”). The student also does not identify herself or the class and section she is in. Additionally, grades are a subject which should be discussed in person with the instructor.