

## Seven Tips for Putting Your Best Foot Forward on Email

Like it or not, composing and responding to emails is part of our daily routine. Here are a few tips to think about when you are dealing with email. Let's start with work-related correspondence.

One, be direct and concise. Many of us read dozens if not hundreds of emails a day. We don't have time to sift through a long, meandering piece to get to the point, or worse, reach the end of an email and fail to understand what the writer was trying to convey altogether.

Two, be conscious of your tone. We can say many things in person that are hard to talk about on email because they could be misunderstood in print. Even jokes can be misconstrued on email unless you use emojis, which are not always appropriate for professional writing.

Three, if you have a conflict or problem with someone, or what you have to say is sensitive or potentially explosive, pick up the phone. It's probably faster, and you can immediately clarify what you are saying, whereas on email, if you sound upset, the receiver could be hurt or offended, which will affect a resolution to your situation.

Four, delay responding to important or sensitive material if you are feeling tired or out of sorts. Never, NEVER, send an angry email. It's bad enough to say something unkind that you immediately regret in person, but the written word can be reread countless times and forwarded or posted. Take a walk or do five minutes of deep breathing or other distractions to calm yourself down before responding in haste to something that could backfire on you.

Five, always proofread your emails and double-check your facts, such as website addresses, names, and titles of books, etc., so that you are not sending out misinformation or broken links. Be mindful as well about sending links to lengthy articles and videos, which may sound fascinating to you but could be very time-consuming for the recipient.

Six, do your best with professional correspondence, but in personal correspondence, don't be a perfectionist. We don't have to get everything exactly right when we are messaging friends. It can be stressful to put that onus on ourselves.

Seven, know when to end the dance. My mother was in her late 80s when she got on Facebook. One day she announced that she had responded to all her Facebook messages. She looked so happy with herself, as though she had achieved a great feat. A few hours later, she had a long face. I asked what was wrong and she said, "They all wrote back! It's like homework." Indeed, we all have to know when to recognize that a particular email thread is over and answering is either optional or unnecessary.

With a bit of thought and practice, you can save yourself time and headaches on email

and be more respectful of other people's time, which will make people happier to hear from you.