

# *Professional Emails: Do's and Don'ts*

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**Abstract:** *In accordance with generally accepted standards, the formal email is the opposite of the informal one. Generally accepted formal standards usually denote professionalism, whereas the absence or lack of standards would be seen as informal. Compared to an informal email, a formal email has various characteristics, such as a standard header, salutation, closing, and formatting. When writing a formal email, begin with a greeting, thank the recipient, state the purpose, add the closing remarks, end with a closing.*

**Keywords:** *Formal Email, Professional Email, Template, Account, Recipient, Closing remark.*

## **1. Introduction**

An email is a message distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network. Generally speaking, emails can be broken down into two categories:

One-to-many, where a large list of people is sent the same or very similar emails from a source to which they have intentionally subscribed (e.g. a newsletter, an event invitation).

Transactional, where an email is sent to a person on an individual basis, usually as a result of an action they have taken (e.g. making a purchase, receiving a shipping update).

Many people have multiple email addresses, including a personal one used to communicate with friends and family, and a business one assigned to them by the company they work for. Each email address will vary depending on the type of personal email account a person chooses to use and the type of account the corporation sets up for him. Etiquette and security also vary, depending on which account you are using and what messages you are sending.



## **2. Email Access**

Personal email accounts can be accessed from almost anywhere, even if you read your mail at home through a program such as Microsoft Outlook. Most personal email services have Web-based email inboxes where you can read, write and edit email from any computer. Many corporations have email accounts that can only be accessed at work or through a work computer. Usually those accounts are routed through a program such as Outlook, and users do not have access to the Web-based service. Passwords and other items that need editing in corporate email are changed by an IT employee instead of your own settings, as they would be in personal email.

### **Security**

You can be relatively sure that your email use is not being monitored in your personal email. Corporate email, on the other hand, should be

considered an open book to your employer. Everything, from the messages you write to the attachments you send, are subject to scrutiny and should be kept strictly business. Unlike a personal email account, which can be used as you please, corporate email accounts are maintained and paid for by a company that wants the accounts used for business purposes. Some companies will also have stronger password and email security than you would find on a standard account. This is especially true if information like client names or financial spreadsheets are exchanged via the corporate email system.

### **Etiquette and Attachments**

Personal and corporate-based email systems have different standard etiquette. While you might send a casual email to a family member or a funny picture to a friend from a personal email account, the same should not be done from a corporate-based email account. Corporate email messages should be checked carefully for grammar or spelling errors; they should include your full name and the full name of the recipient. They should not include any abbreviations or Internet speak. Attachment size may also vary, depending on the email system. Hotmail provides 10GB attachments via SkyDrive, while Yahoo and Gmail both have a 25MB attachment limit for email. The company you work for may have set a lower limit on attachments sent via the corporate email system. <sup>1</sup>

I applied traditional research methods to emphasize the importance of the professional email structure. Therefore, I performed a case study in the company where I work, choosing to focus on a professional email from our security officer.

### 3. What is a formal/professional email?

A formal email is typically sent to someone who is in authority. Examples of someone who can receive a formal email: a teacher, a public official, or even a business company.

If the workplace has a formal environment, formal emails should be used with the boss and colleagues unless they ask otherwise. Many workplaces are moving towards a more casual environment and this often carries over to email communication.

I searched for an example of email to prove how it should look and to highlight what features we should pay attention to. In order to create an appropriate professional email, we have to follow 5 simple steps:

1. Begin with a greeting
2. Thank the recipient
3. State the purpose
4. Add the closing remarks
5. End with a closing

*Dear colleagues,*

*Following the internal Health and Safety control, I noticed that a part of our employees do not use the monitor on the desk, but prefer to work directly on the laptop.*

*I want to point out the using the monitor is mandatory for avoiding strain on your sight.*

*In the attachment, you have a material about this topic and some information regarding the correct position at the office.*

*Please let me know if there are some questions or you need support.*

*Have a nice day!*

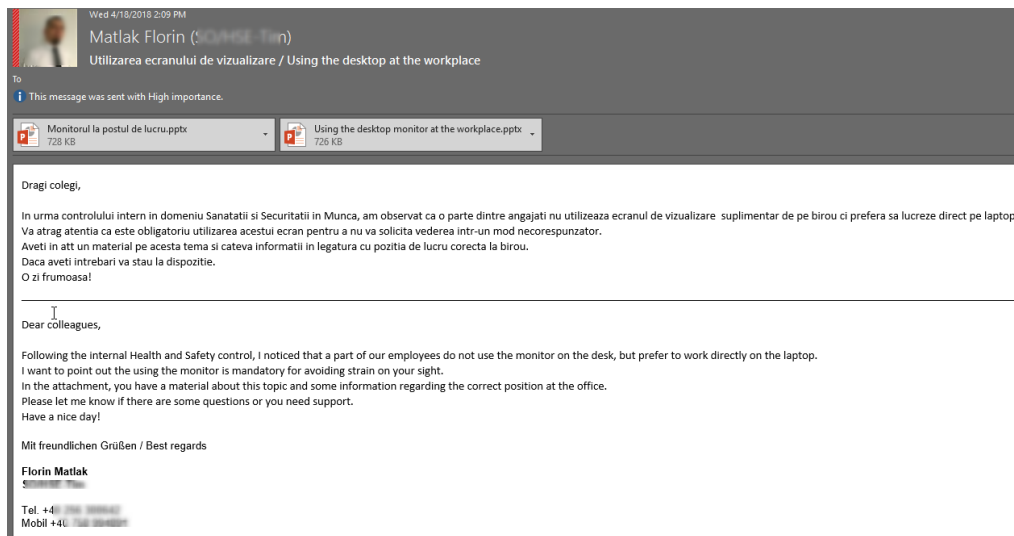
*Best regards.*

In the following picture, we can see that my colleague Florin observed the structure of the professional email when sending a message to the whole company, making the employees aware of what it means to use the desktop at the workplace.

He chose to begin with „Dear colleagues” and set the subject of the email as „Using the desktop at the workplace”. He made the employees aware of the importance of using an additional monitor while working, not just the laptop, to avoid strain on their sight.

The use of the desktop monitor instead of the laptop screen is recommended for keeping a healthy and comfortable position at the workplace, for protecting the eyes and avoiding stress caused by using an improper screen, or for reducing the stress on the spinal cord and neck muscles.

Florin also attached a Pdf file on this topic to emphasize the importance of the message. For the closing, he chose the greeting „Have a nice day!”, and it is also important that my colleague ended the email with his signature including his name, the department and the phone numbers where the employees can contact him.



#### 4. Formal Emails versus Informal Emails. Differences

A formal email differs from an informal email. An informal one usually goes to a familiar person, often someone such as a friend or family member. When sending an informal email, the structure and tone need less attention.

What makes a formal email different from an informal one is the structure. A formal email has a well-defined structure, with a specific salutation (the opening part of the email), signature section, opening sentence, and body.

The language used also differs. In professional emails, avoid using abbreviations, contractions, slang, emoticons, and other informal terminology. The tone of a formal email is different as well. An informal email may not even use complete sentences or proper grammar, but a formal email always does.

##### **Writing a Formal Email**

While an informal email can often be sent quickly, writing a formal email typically takes a little more thought and time. Careful consideration needs to be given to each email element.

##### **Common elements in a formal email:**

- *Subject Line* - The subject line is what the reader sees in their inbox. If the subject line is misleading or missing information, the email may not get read. The message may even be sent to spam. The more formal the email is, the more detailed the subject line should be. But beware of making the subject line too long.
- *Salutation*- The salutation addresses the person who receives the email directly. It is always used in formal email messages, but sometimes skipped in informal ones.
- *Introduction* - The opening of a formal email often requires the sender to introduce themselves. In contrast, informal emails are sent to someone known and the introduction is not needed.

- *Body* - The body of a formal email typically elaborates on the purpose of the email. Elaboration may not be needed in an informal email. Although the body contains detailed information, it is important to write clearly and concisely in a formal email. Remember the reader is not familiar to the sender and may not be familiar with the topic.
- *Closing* - How a formal email ends is equally important. Since the email closing is the last thing the recipient looks at, the email closing can leave a lasting impression. A good formal email closing also reminds the reader who is writing since it should include the full name, contact information, and title (if appropriate). If possible, use a professional signature template for added impact. <sup>2</sup>

#### Writing formal and informal emails

It is important that you use the correct style when writing an email.

Think about	Formal	Informal
<b>Purpose</b>	Business and important messages.	Informal messages.
<b>Audience</b>	Business and work colleagues.	Friends and family.
<b>Style and accuracy</b> Don't use slang, exclamation marks or smiles in formal emails.	<b>Professional - accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar</b> Thank you for your prompt response.	<b>Friendly - accuracy is less important</b> Thx 4 email, will call you lbr! ☺ x
<b>Beginning and ending</b> Email is a fairly new format and there are no agreed rules for starting and ending.  Remember to use a formal style when writing business or work emails.	<b>Start and end appropriately</b> Dear Mr/Mrs/Chris Dear Sir/Madam Yours sincerely (if you know their name) Yours faithfully (if you don't know their name) Regards Kind regards (use first name if you know the person or if they have asked you to)	<b>No rules - your choice</b>
<b>Use of contractions</b> <b>No contraction:</b> "I will not be able to come to the meeting." <b>Contraction:</b> "I won't be able to come to the party."	<b>No contractions</b> Thank you very much for the voucher. I am looking forward to spending it next time I visit your shop.	<b>Contractions can be used</b> Thanks so much for the voucher - I'm chuffed, can't wait to spend it! Just gotta decide what to buy LOL!
<b>Common contractions</b>	I am We are You are Will not Was not	I'm We're You're Won't Wasn't

## 5. Conclusions

The main difference between these two types of emails is that formal writing is straight to the point, less detailed, and informative sentences are written in a passive tone. Informal writing, on the other hand, uses descriptive words and is written in the active voice.

The professional email that I have studied argues the case for the importance of following the correct email structure.

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