

Email Etiquette

Email is a communication tool provided by the Austin School District for your professional use. Like all forms of communication, email is most effective when it utilizes the “3 C’s” of communication — **Clarity, Conciseness, and Courtesy**. The etiquette tips below will help you to use your email to its fullest advantage:



- 1. Establish a clear ‘subject’ line.** The subject line tells the reader what your email is about, and helps them determine whether to read further. This is especially helpful if the receiver is not the main recipient, but is copied on the email. Use captions to emphasize the need for immediate attention, such as “Time Sensitive,” “Action Required,” or “High Priority.”
- 2. ‘Front-load’ your message.** Present the central idea of your email in the first few lines. Your recipient may read only these thoroughly — then browse through the rest. If you need a response or prompt action, state that information with a timeline at the beginning of the email.
- 3. Keep it short.** Respect your reader’s time. In general, email should be the length of your computer screen before scrolling. State your message in the fewest sentences possible, and give details in an attachment.
- 4. Maintain protocols.** Avoid confusing the chain of command by selecting carefully who the e-mail is “To” and who is “cc”ed as a courtesy or to be kept informed.
- 5. Be judicious in determining who is copied on each email.** Ask yourself, “Does each person in the ‘cc’ line really need to see this message?”
- 6. Edit and proofread your email.** Use standard capitalization spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Workplace emails are formal and represent your professional demeanor.
- 7. Consider how an attachment can help communicate.** Sending an attachment is a normal practice when you are submitting a document for review or exchanging information. Here are some tips to consider before attaching a document — **Title the document in a way that is easy for the recipient to find once it is downloaded. Be sure not to send overly large attachments unless you are sure that your recipient’s Internet connection and email client can handle them.**
- 8. Be polite and professional at all times.** It is easy to be abrupt when in a hurry, but remember that it is always professional to be courteous and respectful. Use neutral language and leave negative emotions out of your message. Remember that what you write cannot be taken back. Misinterpretations can happen very easily due to the lack of ‘nonverbals’ — cues we rely on in person to interpret a person’s motives and intentions. If you are angry or frustrated, ask yourself, Would I say this in person? Am I putting the receiver in an awkward position? How would I feel if I got this email message? Usually, by the time you consider the above questions, you will be calm enough to write your message using a different approach. Catching someone by surprise in an emotional message is a quick way to alienate your reader and compromise your communication goal.
- If it appears that an email dialogue has turned into a conflict, suggest an end to the exchange of messages, and that issues be resolved by telephone or in person.
- 9. Remember that email is public.** Keep in mind that designated District employees may review any email message sent or received by any employee. In addition, your message may be forwarded to others, even to individuals outside of the District. Consider how your message may be interpreted.
- 10. Response Expectation** As a general rule, AISD employees should read and respond to all email within two business days.
- 11. When it is best not to use or ‘forward’ email.** There are sensitive subjects that are not appropriate email topics, primarily because misinterpretation could have serious consequences. Some topics that generally should be addressed outside of email are:
 - Disciplinary action.
 - Conflicts about grades.
 - Personal information.
 - Concerns about fellow classmates/ workmates.
 - Complaints.

If you’re unsure whether a topic is too sensitive for email, ask your supervisor

