

About Emails and their use

Emails are an excellent form of written communication for today's world. They can be quickly written, they have editorial facilities (cut, paste; variety of type faces, sizes, colours; spelling and grammar checks), can be sent straight from your desk or your lap; can be received in many cases within minutes of being sent, can be stored on the computer, can be printed out on paper, can carry documents and pictures (as attachments), can bear in the body of the text direct links to websites, can be sent to many recipients, can be forwarded and replied to, and, above all, if you have an email account (which is free to set up and costs you nothing to use) and you have access to an online computer or suitable mobile 'phone more or less anywhere in the world, emails can be sent and received at no cost to you. Moreover, environmentally, they save paper, ink, envelopes and the cost of collection, transport and delivery.

There is something to bear in mind when writing and sending emails. They are **relatively, but not totally, secure**. By this, I mean that it is possible for them to be read in transmission by people they are not meant for. The percentage which are actually read by a third party must be very, very small and most of what is said in emails won't be of interest to unscrupulous or nosy people. But just bear in mind that we have heard in the news from time to time of people in high office in the Country having their emails read and 'leaked'. In view of this it would be wise never to send very sensitive information, like bank details and numbers, and credit card numbers, by email. But don't be frightened off by this – emails are still an excellent way to communicate in writing.

When using your email account on a **public (or shared) computer** make sure you always sign out when you have finished otherwise the next person to use the computer could read all your email correspondence.

A few words about the **etiquette** (or perhaps I should say *manners*) of writing emails. In general terms it seems acceptable to begin with *Hi...* (*High John*), but not perhaps to someone whom you don't know. In that case, *Hello...* maybe more appropriate, or *Good morning/afternoon...* or even *Dear...* Personally, when I begin a correspondence my initial email will begin *Dear ...* If the person replies with *Hello...* or *Hi...* I shall then feel comfortable to respond similarly. (I began a brief correspondence with my local MP with *Dear Mr...*; when after a few correspondences he wrote to me *Hi Terry*, I felt free to address him in the same way.) Signing off can be *Cheers*, *Best wishes*, *Yours sincerely*, *Love*, – whatever seems to match your form of address and seems appropriate to the person you are addressing.

One other point in regards to this. I think an email is in a way a rather **casual form of correspondence**, so I would not use this to express condolences to express sympathy for a bereavement. Not at this stage in the use of emails, anyway.

It also seems a nice thing generally to **reply** to an email from someone, even if it is only to say that you have received it, with simple word of thanks. (This will be omitted if it is obviously from a non-person (computer-generated), or perhaps it is from a very large organisation where the email you received is just a matter of course.)

Emails get lost from time to time – not often, though. So if your email is of some importance, ask the recipient to let you know that it has been safely received. If you don't receive an acknowledgement of receipt within the time period you would have expected, drop another email or make contact some other way.

Finally, it is a good idea to have **more than one email address**, perhaps from more than one provider (eg Yahoo, gmail, easy).

PLEASE NOTE: The above comments are passed on in good faith, as simply being a reflection of my own experience practice.