

## Identifying guidelines for writing effective emails

The following section is a list of guidelines on how to write email effectively. Bear in mind, however, that these guidelines should be considered in relation to the purpose of the communication, the relationship between the sender and the receiver, and the regional and professional culture that one operates in.

For each guideline, write down in the description column whether you think it is a matter of *language and expression [LE]*, *style and tone [ST]*, *proofreading and editing [PE]*, *organisation [O]*, *quality of content [QC]* or *formatting [F]*. The first one has been done for you. Note that it is possible for a guideline to have more than one description.

Table 8.3 Guidelines for writing effective emails

Guideline	Description
1. Business emails, like all business documents, should be objective and professional in tone.	ST
2. Include a clear and comprehensive subject line. Change the subject line, if necessary, in an on-going email discussion to indicate to the recipients that they are getting a new message instead of a recycled one.	
3. Proofread and edit every message before hitting the send button. A business message full of language errors can be offensive, and reflects negatively on the senders and their organisations.	
4. Use professional greetings (e.g., <i>Dear Mr Chan</i> ) and sign-offs (e.g., <i>Kind regards</i> , <i>Sincerely</i> , <i>Best wishes</i> ). You should only use more informal expressions such as 'Hi' for opening and 'Bye' for the sign-off if you have a very friendly relationship with the addressee.	

5. Refrain from using 'emoticons' or keyboard symbol codes in business emails to convey emotions (e.g., regret, satisfaction) as this has no place in business correspondence, unless you know the recipients very well. Also, be careful of the use of capital letters for emphasis, or you may come across as aggressive and rude.	
6. Pay attention to the length of your email. Bear in mind that emails are composed mainly for quick reading and prompt action, so if they are brief and concise, they have a better chance of being read thoroughly. Make use of attachments for communicating detailed information.	
7. Ensure that all information which the recipient requires is included in your email. This will help reduce back and forth emailing between parties due to omitted information. Also, anticipating what the recipient needs and including such information will reflect well on you and your organisation, showing that you are proactive and audience-focused. In short, write with the audience and their needs in mind.	
8. Highlight important information by making use of bullet points, headings and sub-headings.	
9. Remember the 5 'C's of email writing; make sure your message is <i>clear, coherent, complete, concise, and courteous</i> . Also remember the <b>IBC</b> structure for writing – introduction, body and conclusion.	
10. Avoid using ambiguous abbreviations and acronyms, as well as using the lower case 'i' for the personal pronoun 'I' in your messages to ensure clarity in communication.	