

Three-Stage Process in Email Writing

Planning

Analysing your purpose and audience

Determine your purpose

Most email messages have both **general** and **specific** purposes.

General purposes can form your overall strategies in writing. They include making moves to inform, to persuade or to collaborate. The general purpose determines the amount of audience participation you need and the overall control of your message. For instance, when your aim is to inform by disseminating information, you tend to have maximum control over your message, and require minimum audience participation. Comparatively, in emails that aim to collaborate, you will require more audience participation and may experience less control over your messages because you may have to cater to new data and unforeseen responses.

Specific purposes are focused objectives set to accomplish particular tasks. They can be clear and straightforward, such as placing an order for goods, or more complex, like persuading an audience to offer support and funds. To determine the specific purpose, consider what you want the audience to think and do after reading your message.

Know your audience

To plan for an effective, reader-oriented email message, you need to know your audience well to serve their needs and fulfil their expectations.

Your primary audience will receive the email message directly, while your secondary audience may include anyone who is indirectly involved in the communication process. It is likely that the secondary audience may be affected by your message, or they may need to approve, or hear about it. As such, they may expect to receive a carbon copy of your email message.

For all levels of audience, you should determine their level of knowledge and interest before writing to better cater to their needs and expectations. To know your audience better, ask these questions to develop an audience profile when planning your emails:

Who are the audience?

What are their attitudes?

What are their professions?

What are their cultural backgrounds?

What do they need to know?

Why should they care about my message and email?

How can I address their concerns and needs?

What is their probable response to my message?

Writing

To ensure that your email clearly conveys what it intends to say, and to maximize your audience's acceptance of your message, it is essential to pay attention to the following elements when you are composing:

Quality of content: Research and select relevant, accurate and useful information for your content to fulfil the purpose and your audience's needs. Check that the content provided is adequate, relevant and accurate.

Organisation: Organise your content in a clear and coherent manner, beginning with your main idea. The rest of your message should strive to support, explain and demonstrate this point.

Language and expression: Ensure your use of language is correct and your expressions are clear, coherent and concise.

Style and tone: Choose words carefully and use the appropriate tone to reflect the degree of formality, professionalism and courtesy that is appropriate to meet the needs of the audience and purpose.

Reader-oriented approach: Adopt a reader-centred approach, where you consider the needs and benefits of the readers in your writing. This is often reflected in your choice of words, use of language, style and tone.

Reviewing

Before sending your emails, always revise, edit and proofread to evaluate the content and readability of the messages. Consider the following when reviewing:

Formatting: Present your email in a professional and neat layout, by providing adequate white space between paragraphs, crafting an appropriate subject title and making use of bullet points to enhance reader-friendliness.

Proofreading and editing: Edit and rewrite your message or part of it to achieve the 5Cs of clarity, coherence, conciseness, correctness and courtesy. Proofread your message by identifying and correcting errors in grammar, style and tone, and mechanics such as punctuation and spelling.