

# **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR IN-BOX: USING E-MAIL EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY**

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With so much work conducted virtually, it is important for your career success to use e-mail effectively and efficiently. Here are 15 rules to help you do that:

1. At the start of each day, check your e-mails quickly for key messages if you feel you really have to, and then turn it off. Then select the most important and valuable strategic task you are facing in your career and work on that until it is finished. Resist the temptation to begin your day by wandering around on Facebook or YouTube. Make a “To Do” list so that if you’re interrupted, you’ll get back to work faster.
2. Turn off your e-mail while you are working on other tasks. Allocate certain hours to read and respond to e-mails. Don’t keep your e-mail on constantly and read e-mails as they arrive. Constantly checking your e-mail can prevent you from focusing on higher priority projects. Try adding to your e-mail signature, “I answer e-mail at noon and 5 pm. If you need a quicker response, please call me.”
3. Clear your in-box within eight hours or sooner. Don’t keep people waiting. Try to respond in the same business day. Delete all unimportant e-mails and also delete those you have dealt with. Only keep those in your in-box that serve as a reminder of something important to you. File or archive messages that you might need to refer to in the future.
4. Your goal is to respond so effectively that you end the exchange of e-mails. Be succinct and don’t ramble. To the extent possible, respond immediately once you read an e-mail so it is dealt with and done.
5. Respond to people who are powerless and insignificant. They deserve respect, too. If you are not the right person to answer their question, direct them to someone who is.
6. Acknowledge a significant e-mail you receive so the sender knows you have received it and isn’t left wondering what’s happened to it.
7. Include your telephone number on all e-mails so people can easily contact you if they need to.

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8. Don't write in all capital letters. It looks like you're yelling.
9. Don't write an e-mail in anger. Calm down and then talk to the person with whom you're angry. Try not to be negative in an e-mail. It's likely to come back to haunt you. Always be courteous.
10. When saying "thank you" for something, don't copy everyone on the e-mail, just the person you're thanking.
11. Use a subject line that says clearly what your e-mail is about. Cover one topic per e-mail. If that isn't possible, make the subject line, "Four issues to discuss." If you reply to a message on one topic, but write on another topic, change your outgoing subject line to match the new topic.
12. Use clear, informal and personal language. Don't use exclamation points in professional e-mails and don't use the passive voice. It is clearer to write "Fred has made a film about toxics" than "A film has been made about toxics."
13. Use "Bcc" when sending an e-mail to a large number of people. Put your own name in the "To" box. Your recipients don't want their e-mail address sent to strangers.
14. Always use spell-check and re-read your message before pushing the "Send" button.
15. At meetings, don't do text messaging on your cell phone or use Blackberries, i-Phones or Treos. It's rude.