

Waldthausen & Associates, Inc. is a Retained Executive Search firm with the focus on recruiting managers that influence a company's result and earnings. The firm focuses on recruiting professional managers for US subsidiaries with parent companies located in central Europe.

E-mail Etiquette

How do I compose an e-mail to someone I don't know? Here are a few important points to remember when composing e-mail, particularly when the e-mail's recipient is a superior and/or someone who does not know you.

- Be sure to include a meaningful subject line; this helps clarify what your message is about and may also help the recipient prioritize reading your e-mail.
- Just like a written letter, be sure to open your e-mail with a greeting like Dear Dr. Jones, or Ms. Smith:
- Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN AN E-MAIL SCREAMING A MESSAGE IN ALL CAPS.
- Write clear, short paragraphs and be direct and to the point; professionals and academics alike see their e-mail accounts as business. Don't write unnecessarily long e-mails or otherwise waste the recipient's time.
- Be friendly and cordial, but don't try to joke around (jokes and witty remarks may be inappropriate and, more commonly, may not come off appropriately in e-mail).

What are some guides for continuing e-mail conversations? Once you have exchanged e-mails with a person on a given subject, it is probably okay to leave greetings out of your follow-up e-mails. Here are some other points to consider about continuing conversations over e-mail:

- Try to respond within a reasonable time frame.
- Trim back the old messages
- If someone asks a lot of questions, it may be okay to embed your answers into the sender's message copied at the bottom of your e-mail.

What sorts of information shouldn't be sent via e-mail? Most people do not realize that e-mail is not as private as it may seem. Without additional setup, e-mail is not encrypted; meaning that your e-mail is "open" and could possibly be read by an unintended person as it is transmitted to your reader. With that in mind, *never* send the following information over e-mail:

- Usernames and passwords
- Credit card or other account information

Additionally, avoid sensitive or information that could be potentially damaging to someone's career and/or reputation, including your own. Beyond e-mails general lack of security and confidentiality, your recipient can always accidentally hit the Forward button, leave their e-mail account open on a computer or print and forget that they have printed a copy of your e-mail.

What about sending attachments? The ease of transmitting files to a particular person makes e-mail very attractive. However, there are some guidelines you should follow:

- Never send an attachment to someone you don't know the first time you contact them (unless, of course, the contact has posted a job ad requesting a resume in a Word document).
- Avoid unnecessarily large file sizes. Digital photos especially: most digital photos come off the camera much larger than can be viewed on screen. Learn how to resize your digital photographs.
- When you must send a large file or set of files, do the recipient the courtesy of sending an e-mail telling them what you'll be sending and why.
- Be sure to have anti-virus software installed on your computer to scan all of your outgoing and incoming messages for viruses.

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