

The art of email

How many times have you received an email response that sounded curt, accusatory, indiscreet, was full of typos or was simply sent to you in error?

With technology enabling us to communicate ever quicker, we are under pressure to respond as rapidly, running the risk of errors.

Most email users have never learned to type, we tend to write and proofread on the screen, and so miss many mistakes. It's a case of type first and think later.

Planning

It is good practice to plan before writing, especially if you have several points to make. Planning gives you time to collect your thoughts and decide what you really need to say. Write a draft and put it in the "Draft" box for a while, take a break and revisit it with a fresh mind.

Structure

- Always arrange your material in a reader friendly way to help them navigate and easily understand what it is they are reading.
- Use a greeting and sign-off – although email seems a more informal medium than a letter it is in effect an external letter. Make a judgement on the right degree of formality.
- Keep it visually simple – your reader's computer may not be able to display your carefully designed special effects.

Proofread

Details do matter. Check even the briefest emails before pressing the "Send" button. A mis-typed date, or amount of money, or a missing "not" will confuse, possibly irritate and waste time and create conflict.