

# 33 Ways Not to Screw Up Your Business Emails



## A Reference

1. **Unnecessary emails:** Write emails that serve a purpose or advance a conversation.
2. **Formality failures:** Understand where this message falls on the “formality” spectrum based on the recipient, your relationship, and the context of the message.
3. **Salutations:** Include the recipient’s name at the start.
4. **Verbal virtuosity:** Don’t try to dazzle with big words and long sentences.
5. **Writing like an insider:** Scan your emails for jargon and unfamiliar terms.
6. **Overpacking email:** Don’t put too many ideas or questions in a single message.
7. **Ignoring personal preferences:** Find out how your colleagues prefer to use email.
8. **The too-short message:** Include enough to convey your tone and avoid seeming rude
9. **Setting the wrong tone:** People misinterpret tone all the time. Be explicit about yours.
10. **Problematic punctuation:** Don’t cling to print punctuation rules in less formal emails.
11. **Emoji misfires:** Use them sparingly, accompanied by words.
12. **The wall of words:** Shorten the sentences and paragraphs.
13. **Wasted subject lines:** Summarize the content in the subject line.
14. **Losing face with cut and paste:** Don’t fill in the *To* field until you’ve checked the message.
15. **Overdoing fonts and formats:** Pick one way to add emphasis and stick with it consistently.
16. **Fumbling the sign-off:** Let people know they’ve reached the end.

17. **Neglecting the signature:** Use the signature block as a handy reminder of who you are.
18. **Attachment issues:** As soon as you type that word “Attached,” check that you’ve done it.
19. **Self-absorbed openings:** Make the first paragraph about the reader, not you.
20. **Emails never die:** If privacy is a concern, don’t use email.
21. **Undermining your authority:** Check for speech patterns that make you sound uncertain.
22. **Mistakes you should have caught:** Read before you send (and use automated checking.)
23. **The wrong recipients:** Beware of auto-completed email addresses.
24. **“Reply All” accidents:** Don’t default to *Reply All*.
25. **Sending without a safety net:** Extend the short buffer you can use to *Undo* sending.
26. **No one responds to your emails:** Are you making the request clear and explicit?
27. **Landing in spam:** Avoid disguised links, too many images, and spammy subject lines.
28. **Writing the tough email:** Write a rough draft, wait overnight, and revise it before sending.
29. **Emailing when upset:** Take a moment and clarify your intentions. Cool off if you can.
30. **Replying too quickly:** Reply with “I’ll let you know” if you need time.
31. **Getting tangled in the thread:** When the subject changes, start a new thread.
32. **Business emails in personal time:** Beware of pressuring other people to email outside business hours.
33. **Emailing when there’s a better option:** Consider replacing email with a personal medium or adding voice or video recordings to your email messages.

For more advice, as well as quick fixes and pro tips, see the book *33 Ways Not to Screw Up Your Business Emails*.