

# Business manners in the Electronic Age

## E-MAIL ETIQUETTE:

◆ **Keep tone and language formal:** Abbreviations, jargon, slang, incomplete sentences, "smiley faces" and other emoticons should be avoided in business communication.

Even among colleagues, correspondence should be kept professional in tone and content.

◆ **Adopt a proper structure:** Good e-mail etiquette follows the same rules as regular mail. This includes beginning the e-mail with "Dear so-and-so" and ending with "Yours sincerely" or "Yours faithfully".

Have distinct paragraphs to make for easier reading, and always include your contact details at the end, even if it is not the first e-mail you are sending the person.

◆ **Show consideration and courtesy:** Respect the other party's time by keeping e-mail messages concise.

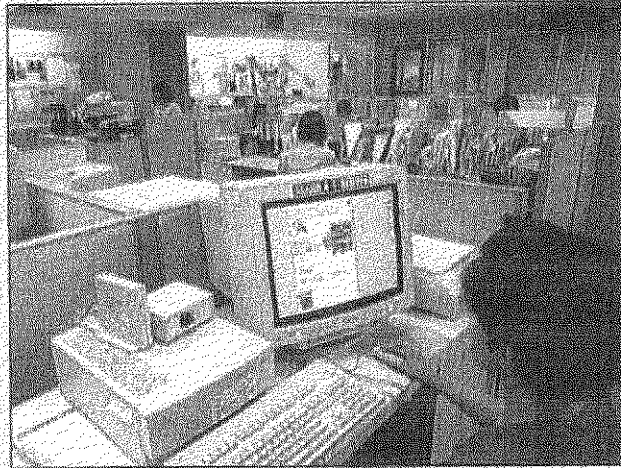
Courtesy goes beyond a plain "please" and "thank you".

For instance, "Please give me your reply by tomorrow" is actually a thinly-disguised order.

A more palatable version is: "I would appreciate it if you could get back to me by tomorrow, thank you."

◆ **Check before sending:** There is nothing more off-putting than receiving an e-mail riddled with spelling and grammatical mistakes, or worse, having your name misspelled.

Such messages convey the impression that the sender is flippant, unprofessional and cannot even be bothered to get the basics right.



## PHONE ETIQUETTE:

◆ **Switch phone to silent mode:** Unless you have a private office, cell phones should be switched to silent mode during office hours to avoid disturbing others.

They should also be muted at meetings, interviews, business lunches and any other professional environment.

If you are expecting an important call, alert the other parties beforehand. It is rude to take calls during meetings and business exchanges.

◆ **Avoid SMS:** Do not use the SMS (short message system) on company time unless it is business-related and is the most effective mode of communication for you and the other party.

The same rules for e-mail etiquette apply in this case. Check the message for accuracy before sending and maintain a sense of decorum.

◆ **Be professional and polite:** Instead of a gruff "hello", answer business calls by giving your name and keeping your tone pleasant.

If you are calling someone on a business matter, keep the conversation short and sweet. Do your homework beforehand, have your notes at hand and don't waste the other party's time.

If the other party does not pick up and a voice-mail function is available, state your name, telephone number and the purpose of your call clearly.

Don't just say "Mary Tan here. Please call me back" as the person has to spend time searching for your number.

It is also basic courtesy to return business calls as soon as possible, and to programme your own voice mail with a concise and polite message.