

Module 5.2: Using Email in the Online Learning Environment

Video Transcript – How to Email Your Professor

Communicating with your instructor throughout the semester is an important part of being an active and engaged post-secondary student. Email is by far the most popular means by which this type of communication takes place. For students, emailing instructors is particularly appealing because it is familiar, easy and convenient. But messages sent via email can easily be misunderstood unless special care is taken in their composition.

To avoid confusion, and to make it as easy for your busy instructors to read and understand your email as possible, there are a few basic principles to keep in mind when sending an email message to your professor. In this video, we are going to cover five of these principles that will help ensure that your email communication is clear, effective, and professional.

First, it is important to use a formal, professional tone when emailing your instructor. Include an informative subject and avoid simply saying “hey” or “hello” For example, if your instructor’s name was Tom Smith, an email to them might look something like “Dear Professor Smith.” You may wish to conclude with a closing like “best regards”. In general, don’t worry about being too formal with your instructor. Think of your email as a professional, business communication.

Second, make sure that your email is grammatically correct. You should think about your email as a chance to show your instructor that you care about the class, and that you are willing to take the time to proofread your message before sending it. It is also a good idea to break your message up into multiple paragraphs with appropriate punctuation. This makes your email easier to read, and it helps to avoid unnecessary confusion. Remember, your instructor is much more likely to help you if they are able to understand what you are saying.

Third, it is helpful to keep your message brief. Avoid long emails that go into too many unnecessary details or that appear to be long-winded rants. Keep your tone friendly and respectful, and keep your emails concise and

to the point. With that said, it is also not a good idea to be too short with your message, as shortness can sometimes be misinterpreted as rudeness.

Fourth, it is a good idea to make sure that you actually need to send the email in the first place. Sometimes, simply reading through your syllabus, assignment description, class website, or lecture notes can answer many of the questions you might have.

Finally, it is important not to expect that your instructor will respond to you immediately. Unlike with instant messaging, email responses can take anywhere from one to three days. Your instructors have a lot of email to respond to, along with their other responsibilities, so patience is advisable. Moreover, it is important to only re-send an email after at least five days have passed.

In this video, we covered five key principles that, if followed when writing an email to your instructor, will help ensure that you communicate clearly, effectively, and professionally.