

Some thoughts on email protocols

- Is email the right medium for what you want to say? Might it be better to talk on the phone or face-to-face?
- Always give your email a clear subject/title to help your recipients understand what your message is about and help them refer back to it in their in-box
- Use 'to' and 'cc' fields correctly. The 'to' is for primary recipients and 'cc' for those receiving the message for information only. Some organisations undertake not to use the 'blind copy' ('bc') facility
- Only send replies to those that need one or when a reply has been specifically requested, although an unsolicited 'thank you' is still an important courtesy in our view
- Be brief and get to the point quickly. As with any written communication – re-read it before sending. A common criticism of email is that it can be abrupt in tone – how will your email be received do you think?
- Think carefully before using email for giving feedback or comments on an individual's performance – unless it's been exemplary and you're just confirming what you will have said to their face. Think how you would like to receive such information
- Only print out a message if you need to refer to it away from your screen, not as a matter of habit
- Use 'return receipt' only if you have specific delivery concerns
- Don't let your day be driven by your in-box. Switch off the alert sound on your PC that announces new mail and access only at certain intervals
- As with paper, try to 'handle' each email only once by filing or deleting as necessary
- Do some regular house-keeping on your in-box, sent and deleted items and, at least weekly, delete or archive messages. It will speed up the system.
- Give constructive feedback to others on their use of email.