

## Are You Getting an "F" in Email?

Email has become an integral tool for business and personal communication. Quicker than a letter; more concrete than a phone call; clearer than a fax and more accessible than an in-person conversation. The problem with email is, the majority of individuals do not **use it properly**: personal and business email is mixed together; important messages are buried under SPAM and newer messages; files are lost or forgotten. **Are you making the grade in email?** Consider the following areas and tips to become an **A+ email user**.

**Forwards-** Sending non-essential emails to people you **rarely speak to**. If you haven't spoken to someone in 6 months, forwarding them a joke email **does not count as keeping in touch**. Only send emails that are important, useful and relevant to people you know and speak to regularly. Nothing says "I Love You" like being **one of fifty recipients**.



**File-** Did you **remember to attach** it before you sent it? Avoid aggravating the person waiting for the file and the secondary "oops" email. Attach the file **before you begin writing** the email, so you can avoid the sign off urge to click send before you attach your file.

**Folder-** Do you **sort your mail**? Or does it sit in the inbox? The best way to deal with large amounts of email is to sort it into subfolders. Try **setting filters** so newsletters go directly to one of these folders. **Create folders** for specific clients, associations, projects, for items to read later, or things to follow up on. It will save you time looking through your recycle bin or through pages of emails in your inbox. You will be **less likely to forget** to do something urgent and you won't get bogged down by "read later", non-urgent types of email.

**Flub-** Send it to the wrong person, reply-all or accidentally send an email to everyone on a mailing list. Nothing makes you blush like sending a private email to an entire list serve. Always double check the recipient and take care when replying to mass emails.



**Forget-** Is there an important email sitting at the bottom of your inbox or in your draft folder? Check your folders regularly to avoid missing deadlines, RSVP dates, and special opportunities. Don't rely on your memory. Use the flag option in Outlook.



**Filter-** Are important emails ending up in your junk mail folder? Check it regularly. Add email addresses to your safe senders list when they accidentally get filtered to your junk mail. Add certain domains, such as your company's, to your list of safe senders. That way all addresses from that domain will always be marked as safe.

**Friends, Family, Fools-** do you keep your business contacts separate from personal ones? Use a separate email address or inbox for personal and business mail. Free web-based email addresses such as Hotmail look unprofessional for business purposes and sending personal email from a corporate account will lead to dealing with personal matters on the clock. Try having a spare email address you use when you must give an email when signing up for something. Check it infrequently to clear it out and read anything of value.



**Fixed Position-** Do you change email addresses so often no one can keep up? Do you have so many similar address that people aren't sure which ones they should use? Getting the same email sent to each of your email addresses? Make everyone's communication much easier by clarifying and sticking with one business and one personal email account. When someone sends something to the wrong one, let them know to reach you at the other.



**Freedom-** Do you check your Blackberry every 5 minutes, even when driving, eating supper, or in a meeting? Are you chained to your email, rushing to open your inbox every time a new email comes in? Email is meant to liberate you, not chain you down. Turn off alerts, allow unhampered time with family and friends. Our brains can only focus on one thing at a time, when we add additional things to think about or do, our attention gets split. Remember, just because you get an email at 11 pm, doesn't mean you need to respond at that time.

**Follow-up-** Do you get back to people in a timely manner, or do they need to email you 2-3 times, call you, and show up on your door step? Do individuals need to email you more than once about the same issue? Be sure to get back to people in a timely manner or they will believe you did not receive the email or find more time consuming ways to get what they need from you. Create an effective system for timely follow up.

**Move yourself to the top of the class with business colleagues, friends and family by implementing these improved email strategies.**

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