

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Communicating Professionally with Professors & TAs

Why Professional Communication Matters

Building good communication habits with professors and TAs can make a big difference in your academic experience. Clear, respectful emails can:

- Help you get timely and helpful responses
- Build your credibility as a student
- Create positive professional relationships
- Prepare you for workplace communication

Before You Write

Before sending an email, check whether the answer might already be available in:

- The course syllabus or any Brightspace/D2L announcements
- Assignment instructions, rubrics, or lecture slides
- A previous email response from your instructor
- Class discussion posts for inquiries

If you still need to reach out, make sure your question is **specific** and includes enough context (course name, section and assignment, etc.)

Structure of a Professional Email

Subject line: Be short and clear.

- *SOC 111 - Question About Reflection Paper Guidelines*

Greeting: Use a formal salutation, such as:

- *Dear Professor Smith,*
- *Hello Dr. Brown,*

Opening line: Briefly introduce yourself if it's your first message.

- *My name is First Last, and I am in your SWP 111 lecture on Thursdays.*

Body:

- Clearly state your question or request
- Be concise and organized
- Include any necessary context (assignment title, page number, due date)

Closing:

- Thank them for their time and/or assistance
- End with a professional conclusion such as *Sincerely* or *Best regards*,
- Include your **full name and student number** at the bottom

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Example Template - Asking for Clarification

Subject: SWP 111 - Question About Reflection Paper Guidelines

Dear Professor Smith,

My name is Sarah Johnson, and I am in your Thursday SWP 111 class. I wanted to ask for clarification on the reflection paper instructions. Could you please confirm whether we need to use two or three course readings in our analysis?

Thank you for your time and help.

Best regards,

Sarah Johnson

Student #: 123456789

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Starting with “Hey,” “Hi Prof,” or no greeting
- Leaving the subject line blank
- Writing long, unorganized messages
- Forgetting to mention which course you’re in
- Not proofreading before sending

Quick Email Checklist

- Clear subject line
- Professional greeting and closing
- Course name and context included
- Tone is polite and concise
- Proofread for spelling and grammar
- Name and student number added

References

How to write a professional email, with tips and examples. Grammarly. (2023, June 14).

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/emailing/professional-email-in-english/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). *Email etiquette for students*. Email Etiquette for Students - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/email_etiquette_for_students.html