TOP 10 Email Etiquette guidelines

1. Avoid Reply To All like the plague
2. Subject lines make all the difference
3. Use To, Cc, Bcc effectively
4. Determine who really needs to see this
5. Make your messages easy to read
6. Don't propagate SPAM
7. Size really does matter
8. Be careful with your Out Of Office message
9. Determine if email is the best method
10. Consider legal ramifications

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(1) AVOID REPLY TO ALL LIKE THE PLAGUE

By a margin of 2-1, the number 1 most frequent complaint is the use of Reply To All. Avoid using Reply To All. Very rarely do all the people on original distribution need to hear the response. And please, NEVER EVER use Reply To All to tell others to stop using Reply To All !!!

(2) SUBJECT LINES MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

- Always include a subject line in your message, it helps other to manage their email. (otherwise you run the risk people will ignore your email)
- Use the subject line to summarize the body of the e-mail & make the subject line meaningful. Ask yourself *will the recipient(s) know what this e-mail is about*.
- The subject line should be clear, concise and to the point and indicate the topic
- If you are replying to a message and you are changing the conversation of the email, change the subject as well or start a new message. Changing the conversation of an email and not the subject can be confusing and can make filing difficult.
- If your message is very short and sweet (e.g. I'm going on vacation tomorrow) then put all of it in the subject line and add EOM (End Of Message) so the recipients can read from the Inbox & delete (no need to open it)
- Include these "standards" as appropriate:
  - Action Needed by date
  - Response needed
  - Information only, no need to reply
  - No response needed
  - Timely material - read by date
  - Immediate action needed
- If you find yourself wanting to put URGENT in the subject line, you need to consider using the phone!

(3) USE To, Cc, Bcc EFFECTIVELY

To=intended recipients who are expected to take action
Cc=receiving as information only, no action needed
Bcc = hide recipients from others

(4) DETERMINE WHO REALLY NEEDS TO SEE THIS

1. Only send it to the most critical people who need the information.
2. Expand distribution lists and remove unnecessary recipients
3. Use To, Cc, Bcc correctly. For sure, use Bcc when sending to large distributions so no one can use Reply To All.
4. Develop group mailing lists with specific names to target the right audience.

(5) MAKE YOUR MESSAGES EASY TO READ

IF YOU ARE COMPOSING A NEW MESSAGE:

1. Get to the point in the first few lines, provide more detail below that.
2. Put any required action along with a due date in the first few lines.
3. Use simple formatting. Here are some guidelines:
    - Preferably, use black text on a white background
    - Avoid the use of color text on a color background
    - Avoid the use of the pretty HTML backgrounds
    - Use at least a size 12 font
    - Avoid the ransom note look - no more than 2-3 fonts in a message
    - Use an easy to read font
    - Use bullets and paragraphs to define key points
4. Use proper grammar.
5. Spell out acronyms.
6. Be sure you have spell check turned on.
7. Highlight questions that need answers or have an action to be taken so that it is easy for the addressee to see what they need to do or answer.

IF YOU ARE REPLYING or FORWARDING A MESSAGE:

1. Cut extended email threads down to just what is relative to the current conversation (e.g. clean up all the irrelevant content ... headers or message body that is not appropriate)
2. Change the subject line if the gist of the message changes on your reply or forward.
3. And of course everything under "compose" above is still true . . .

(6) DON'T PROPOGATE SPAM

- Don't forward or send cute or funny emails
- For general broadcast information (seminar announcements, giveaways, lost and found, etc.):
    - should go to only those you KNOW will be interested
    - consider instead general broadcast publications for the enterprise
    - could post it on organizational or project web sites
    - could use a local shared network area or a collaborative web site

(7) SIZE REALLY DOES MATTERS

1. Get rid of the HTML backgrounds
2. Put large attachments in the a network share or collaborative space
3. Remove the fancy images or attachments in your signature.

8) BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR OUT OF OFFICE MESSAGES

1. Don't provide details about your absence. No one needs to know you'll be out of the country/on vacation for xx days or weeks.
2. Provide an alternative contact name and phone number who can help.
3. Keep the content generic.
4. Indicate how long you will be unavailable.
5. Include something like the following in your Out Of Office message: "If your matter is resolved prior to my return, please use the Recall function to delete the email you sent me. Thank you."

(9) DETERMINE IF EMAIL IS THE BEST METHOD

Use the phone	Use email	Use IM	Use collaborative sites
• matter is urgent • discussion is unstructured ▪ you need the give and take of a conversation ▪ you do not need a record	• matter is not urgent • you need structure • you need a record • there are many recipients • not all recipients are available immediately	• quick and easy answers • all recipients are online • not many need to be involved in the discussion • no record needed	• can manage content (files) • can hold threaded discussions • can track and manage action items and milestones • can use team calendar area • can share attachments

(10) CONSIDER LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS

Here are some things to consider when composing an email:

- Consider the legal ramifications of what you write and the potential for misinterpretation
- Realize that an e-mail exchange can become an exhibit in a lawsuit
- Be thoughtful when composing an email and judicious in the use of electronic communications
- Determine whether or not you would like what you write to be shown to a jury on a seven-foot screen

Here are some examples of real world lawsuits where an email exchange was an integral part of the litigation:

- Chevron settled a sexual-harassment lawsuit for $2.2 million that involved an interoffice e-mail that began ... 25 reasons why beer is better than women
- Former star investment banker Frank Quattrone was convicted of obstructing federal investigations into stock offerings at Credit Suisse First Boston because he informed employees in an e-mail that he "strongly suggested" that they catch up on file cleaning after he learned about the investigation

Additional tips can be found at the Microsoft site: **12 tips for better email etiquette**
http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HA012054101033.aspx