

Email Etiquette

By James M. Shaker

The easy and instantaneous nature of email makes it easy to forget the permanent nature of these communications. But when a dispute arises, emails are often the first evidence to which both parties turn. Following email etiquette reduces the chance that e-discovery will be embarrassing or harmful to your case.

1. Use the same care and tone for a business email as you would for a business letter.
2. Be courteous. Avoid curse words, all capital letters, !!! or ???.
3. Make a practice of double-checking the To:, CC: and BCC: fields before pressing send. Consider filling in these fields *after* you drafted the email to avoid accidentally pressing “send” before the email is complete. Be careful with “Reply All.”
4. Include a brief subject line that explains the email’s content and purpose.
5. Try to keep your emails to one subject each. For a new subject, start a new message.
6. Use a signature line that includes your contact information.
7. Use complete sentences that would be understandable to a third party. Avoid acronyms. While the meaning of partially-expressed thoughts or abbreviations may be clear to you now, these could be misinterpreted by an opposing party or attorney years later, without context.
8. Copying an attorney on an email does *not* automatically make the email subject to attorney-client privilege.
9. Do not forward chain emails, especially regarding political or controversial issues.

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