

It's no surprise that a recent survey by a nonprofit research group reports that more than 90 percent of Internet users between 18 and 72 said they send and receive e-mail, making it the top online activity just ahead of using a search engine to research a topic. Yet another survey found that more than 85 percent of U.S. Internet users send e-mails. That's 147 million people a day. No doubt, e-mail



has become the primary method of communicating with bosses, colleagues and friends.

But how you communicate in cyberspace is vitally important. While there are no official rules governing e-mail communication, etiquette or guidelines for social behavior employing common courtesy and respect should apply.

Here are some dos and don'ts to remember when communicating via e-mail:

Do...

Do properly and respectfully address the recipient. E-mail is informal but it still needs a greeting. For example, begin with "Dear Mr. Jones." Not including a person's name in your e-mail may appear cold and impersonal.

Do use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. This is important because improper punctuation reflects poorly on you and the hospital. E-mails with no full stops or commas are also difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.

Do complete the subject field and make it meaningful. It makes no sense to send a message that reads "no subject," as your message would appear to be about nothing.

Do read the e-mail before you send it. Reading your e-mail will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings or inappropriate comments.

Do not...

Do not attach unnecessary files. Sending large attachments can be annoying to the recipient.

Do not overuse the high priority option. Overusing it will lose its meaning when you really need it.

Do not write in CAPITALS. It's the equivalent of shouting. This can be highly offensive and trigger an unwanted response.

Do not use e-mail to discuss confidential information. There is no such thing as a private e-mail. Sending an e-mail is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your message to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it.

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. A never-ending e-mail can be irritating.

Do not forward chain letters. They may be laden with viruses that will infect your computer.

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