

MANAGING YOUR EMAILS

SET A TIME FRAME

This is very important. It is easy to lose track of time while checking your mail. In between deleting and replying you can get carried away and find that several hours have slipped by, so it is a good idea to set aside a couple of specific time slots, say one in the morning and one in the afternoon to deal with your messages.

BE PRECISE

Be precise and to the point when answering emails. You could even skip 'Hello' and 'Regards' if you want. I don't think anyone will mind. This benefits you and the person on the receiving end of your email, particularly if that person is busy like you.

Learn to use one-liners effectively. Cut out unnecessary words and sentences. Address the essential: not everything warrants a response. Break your text into lots of paragraphs. It's easier to read and makes your email more approachable.

DELETE RUTHLESSLY

You can easily conclude from the subject line of an email if it's worth reading. If it isn't, delete it without thinking twice. If you don't, thinking that you probably might read it later, then believe me, that email will remain there as unread until you finally decide to do away with it. Act upon the email the first time you see it by either responding immediately, deleting it, or setting it as a task to accomplish at a specific time.

DON'T LEAVE IT FOR THE NEXT DAY

Try to finish replying to emails and clearing your inbox within the time frame you have allocated. It's not always possible, especially if you get more than 100 messages a day, but if the emails aren't dealt with, then the next day it becomes much more difficult for you to sift through your inbox. Think of your inbox as a snowball, the more it rolls, the larger it gets.

PRIORITISE USING LABELS/FOLDERS

You can make folders named 'Friends' or 'Reply today' etc. and when you open your inbox, immediately start shifting messages to their respective folders.

READ IT, ANSWER IT

Many people have the habit of reading all their emails before actually replying to them. Sometimes they might even wait for a couple of hours before getting back to these previously-read messages. This method is ineffective for two reasons.

- First of all you might forget about some emails altogether. Once they are marked as "read" on your inbox, they will get mixed with all the others you have already replied to.
- Secondly, this process will also consume more time since you will probably need to read each email a second time before remembering what you will need to say in the reply. What would be a better approach? Simple, whenever you read an email, answer it right away.

RE-READ ONCE

You can go back and edit typos in a blog post or article but you only get one chance with emails. It's important that your meaning and expression is clear. Also, remember that spell-checking is not enough. Typos and mistakes that form other valid words will not be corrected by the spell checker. **Proofreading is essential.**

MICROSOFT OUTLOOK

If you use Microsoft Outlook, then outlook rules are very useful if your e-mails are not all equal. You may want to read some straight away, others at fixed times and others only when you have time. Outlook rules can separate e-mails into different folders which you set up. It can flag them and notify you that one has arrived.

Outlook is more than just e-mails. It is also a calendar and it can maintain a list of tasks. You can tell outlook about a regular event or task. For example, you may have a meeting to go to every day or week, or a task that needs to be done every day or week. To learn how to use the calendar or the tasks, press F1 and then enter calendar or tasks in the search box.



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