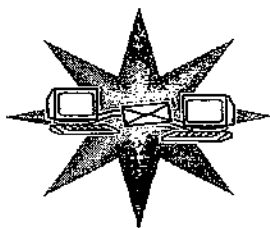


## **CHAPTER THREE: USING TECHNOLOGY TO PROMOTE PUBLIC POLICY**

- ◆ Using E-mail Effectively
- ◆ Spotting E-mail hoaxes
- ◆ Public Policy Resources on the Internet



## Using E-mail Effectively

Whether you are a new or a long-time e-mail user, understanding more about e-mail etiquette and listserv use will help you get the most out of this invaluable communication tool.

### Netiquette

Although e-mail is fundamentally different from traditional paper-based or verbal communication, rules of e-mail etiquette, commonly known as "netiquette," are no less important than those we follow in other modes of communication. How we write in e-mail—particularly in places like listservs—affects how people perceive us, our opinions, and our character. In short, to those who know us only through e-mail, we are what we post. In non-e-mail communication we wouldn't shout at a friend or coworker in conversation, send junk mail or rumored fact to acquaintances (just in case they are interested), or send a letter to a friend with a few extra pages of irrelevant text. However people do the online equivalent of these things every day. Extending common courtesies shown to others in our everyday lives \*offline\* to those with whom we interact \*online\* can go a long way toward making our communications much more effective.

### **Keep these basic rules in mind:**

1. **DO NOT TYPE IN ALL CAPS** for more than one word or subject heading. This is perceived as SHOUTING.
2. **Include a brief but informative subject line** that indicates the contents of the message.
3. **Keep paragraphs short**, and always insert a blank line between them.
4. **Do not use text styles (like bold or italic) or text colors in mailing list messages**, many people will not see them and may even see HTML tags instead.
5. **Always put comments at the top of the message** when forwarding messages.
6. **Quote sparingly**, particularly on listservs. In most cases it is unnecessary to include large portions of the message to which you are replying in your response.
7. **Carefully consider what you write.** Although e-mail feels quick and informal, it is a permanent record and easily forwarded to others.
8. **Be aware of how your reader might perceive your message, and use emoticons (smileys) when possible to help convey a tone of voice :-)** E-mail is more conversational than paper-based media, but just like a traditional letter, it lacks contextual clues such as vocal inflections, gestures, or facial expressions. Your correspondent may have difficulty telling if you are serious or kidding, happy or sad, frustrated or euphoric. Sarcasm is especially dangerous in email.
9. **Do not forward information indiscriminately.** Inbox-clogging chain letters, virus warnings, and hoaxes (also known as spam) consume recipients' valuable time and are the online equivalent of junk mail. Such messages are *never* appropriate for listservs. In the case of virus warnings and other classic chain e-mails, the content is almost always unfounded. *If you cannot verify a message through a credible source, do not forward it.*
10. **Always read over your e-mail before you send it** and use spell check if available.

### **Netiquette Especially For Listservs:**

1. **Always read the guidelines that you receive** when you become a member of an e-mail list, and keep them on file for future reference. Guidelines usually include procedures and rules for posting to the list, information on how to unsubscribe, and information on whom to contact if you have questions or problems.
2. **Do not reply to the entire list unless you think your mail would be helpful and of interest to the majority.** Remember that on many listservs (including the SPPC listserv), using either "reply" or "reply all" will send your message to the entire list.
3. **Avoid "junk" postings** such as:
  - "Me-too" posts sent by well-meaning list members replying only to convey that they agree with a message or have had a similar experience.
  - "Unsubscribe me" messages mistakenly sent to the whole list by subscribers who did not read the instructions for leaving the list or updating addresses.
  - Congratulations messages that appear after a member of the list has mentioned some milestone or personal triumph. Again, send these in private e-mail.
  - Never forward a personal e-mail to a discussion group without first getting permission from the author.



#### **Additional Resources on E-mail and Netiquette**

<http://www.everythingemail.com> - An award winning, comprehensive guide to e-mail use, including tips and an indispensable glossary of e-mail terms  
([http://www.everythingemail.com/email\\_glossary.html](http://www.everythingemail.com/email_glossary.html))

<http://www.webfoot.com/advice/email.top.html#intro> - A Beginner's Guide to Effective E-mail. Consider this an e-mail style guide, with extensive discussion of how e-mail differs from other forms of communication and how to take these differences into consideration when writing. Includes information and examples on context, format, layout, intonation, formality, greetings, and signatures.

[http://email.about.com/library/series/blmailinglists\\_series.htm](http://email.about.com/library/series/blmailinglists_series.htm) - About.com offers a series of articles on mailing lists, covering types of lists, using lists, and creating your own.