

Emailing Professors

You will likely need to communicate with your instructor via email at various points in your college career, often times to arrange meetings, ask simple questions, or make polite requests. Though not an in-person interaction, a well written email can still help you to build a relationship with your professor and benefit your progress in the course. In fact, when professors receive polite, professional emails (as opposed to overly casual, presumptive messages), they are more likely to feel motivated to work with the sender and perceive the student as more likely to succeed.

This handout outlines the basics of why and how to email your instructor. For more comprehensive strategies for email communication, or to see examples, see the Writing Center's handout on [Effective Email Communication](#).

When to email vs. When to meet in person	
Email <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scheduling a meeting• Clarifying deadlines, requirements, assignments, etc.• Replying to an email from your instructor that requires a response	In person <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking in-depth questions about assignments or course content• Reviewing an exam, quiz, paper, etc.• Discussing your grade

Do's and Don'ts	
Do: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use your NC State email address• Add a subject• Use a salutation ("<i>Dear Professor Garcia</i>")• Use proper grammar and spelling• Write in full sentences• Include your name, course, and section number• Acknowledge a reply ("<i>Thank you for your help</i>")	Don't: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions that have already been answered• Send before proofreading• Expect an immediate reply• Complain about a grade or course policy; it's best to have that conversation in person

Other resources to help you connect with professors:

See handouts on [Getting the Most out of Office Hours](#) and [Getting the Most out of Lectures](#).

Sign up for [peer mentoring](#) to work through communicating with professors and any other academic issue

Works Consulted

Bolkan, San & Linn Holmgren, Jennifer (2012). "You are such a great teacher and I hate to bother you but..." Instructors' perceptions of students and their use of email messages with varying politeness strategies," *Communication Education*, 61:3, 253-270.

Foss, Donald J. (2013). *Your Complete Guide of College Success*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.