Strive to Thrive

Career Tips For Ted Rogers School Students

These reports leverage the expertise of BCH Staff to share best practices for students and alumni.

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Tips for Writing Professional Emails

Writing for work is quite a bit different that sending emails to friends and/or family. In order to be effective on a work term or internship, you need to know how to properly craft a professional email (BTW- these tips also apply to emails you send to your Professors).

When to Email Your Supervisor

Your Manager will be busy, so it is best to reduce the number of emails that you send them. Before you press send, you should think critically about the following:

- ☐ Is an email the best avenue for communicating your message? Can you locate the information on your own or ask a colleague? Attend office hours (in the case of a professor?)

- ☐ How complex and/or important is the message?

- ☐ How large is the audience?

- ☐ For more complicated and lengthy messages, consider other forms of communication such as a weekly meeting with your manager, or attending office hours (in the case of a professor).

Best Practices for Emailing

Use a Clear and Concise Subject Line - The subject line should briefly summarize the content of the email so the recipient knows what to expect. For example, "Project Update" or "Request for Meeting."

Start with a Formal Greeting - Use the professor's and manager's name and proper title, such as "Hi Mr. Ali" or Hi Dr. John. "Dear" is considered by some professionals to be an informal greeting, and reserved for those contacts with whom you have a personal relationship with.

Colloquial - If you are working as an intern, you should reflect on the culture of the organization where you work to better adapt to their conventions.

Use a Professional Tone - Tone expresses your attitude towards the audience and the message. You should aim to keep your language polite and formal, avoiding any informal language or slang. Avoid writing words in caps to express your tone, as this can be misinterpreted or result in ambiguous or accidental communication.

State the Purpose of the Email - Be clear about what you want to accomplish in the email. Whether you're asking a question, requesting information, or providing an update, make sure it is clear from the outset.

Provide Relevant Information - If you are requesting information, provide any necessary context or details so the manager or professor understands the full scope of the request. If you are providing a status update, give specific and concise supporting details about what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done.

Use Proper Grammar and Spelling - Your email should be well-written and free of errors. Proofread your email before sending it. You can also put it in draft mode and edit it the next day if it is not necessary to send it right away.

Use Proper Paragraph Format - Your email should be easy to read and structured in proper paragraphs that have a main idea, supporting detail and analysis, along with transitions.

Be Respectful - Always be respectful and professional, even if you are frustrated or upset about a situation. Do not send emails that express negative emotions as emails can easily be forwarded and be used to undermine your credibility, but rather discuss your concerns during a weekly meeting or office hours to avoid misunderstanding.

Close with a Polite Message - Use a closing message that is appropriate for the level of formality in your email, such as "Best regards."

Include your Contact Information - Provide your name, job title, and contact information (phone number and email) so the manager/professor can easily get in touch with you if needed.

For More Complex and High-stakes Emails - Save the email in draft mode and edit it the next day (if possible).

By following these tips, you can write a professional email to your Supervisor, another Manager and/or your Professor that will be clear, concise, and respectful.

i Once you have determined that an email is the most effective channel of communication, critically reflect on the following before you press "send":
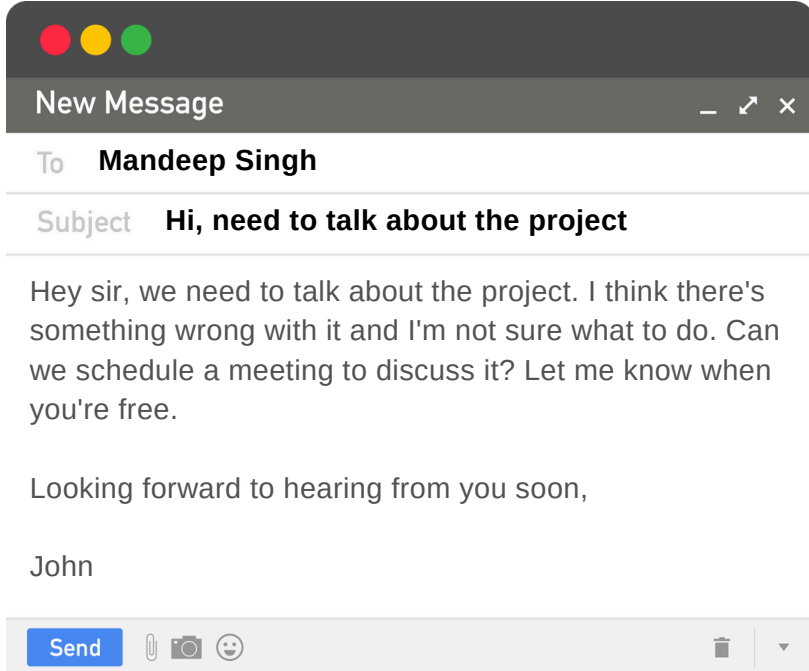
- [ ] The purpose of the communication.

- [ ] The needs of the audience (i.e. Why is the email important to your audience?)

- [ ] How large is the audience?

- [ ] Time frame (do you need to immediately send the email or can it wait? For instance, can you chat with your Professor after class?)
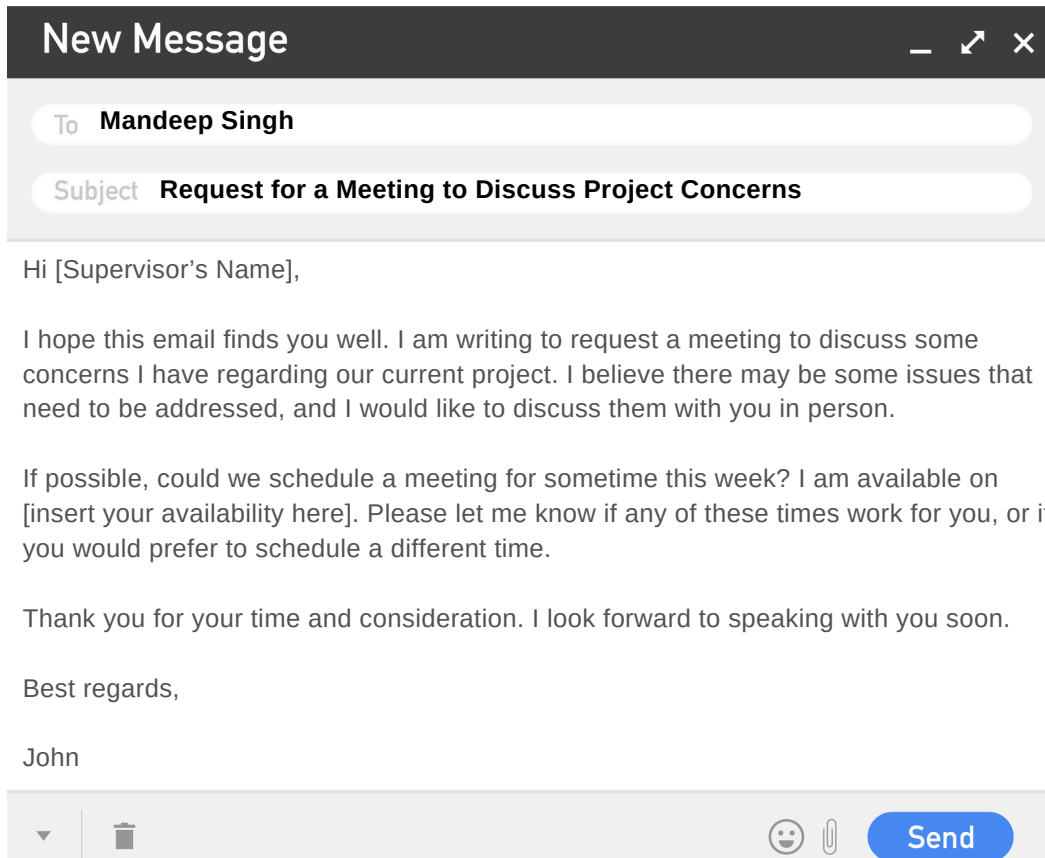
How to Structure a Professional Email

Section	Purpose	Answers this Question
Summary (the RE line)	Summary of your email that articulates the subject concisely while also providing enough detail. A clear subject line makes it easy to search and locate your email.	What do you want?
Introduction and Context	Build rapport with your audience. Articulate the purpose of your email. Be direct. "I am writing to you to provide a status update on…"	Why are you conveying this information?
Details and Discussion	Provide further details if necessary. Depending on the situation, you can use bullet points to efficiently organize information.	Have you precisely described what you need or what happened?
Next Steps and Actions	Suggest next steps and/or re-establish rapport with your audience. Be sure to include your name and student number (in a university context).	What have you done and what does the audience need to do?

Ineffective Emails and How to Revise Them

Example 1: Intern Requests Support for a Project

New Message _ ↗ ✕

To **Mandeep Singh**

Subject **Hi, need to talk about the project**

Hey sir, we need to talk about the project. I think there's something wrong with it and I'm not sure what to do. Can we schedule a meeting to discuss it? Let me know when you're free.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,

John

Send

Example 1: Revised

New Message _ ↗ ✕

To **Mandeep Singh**

Subject **Request for a Meeting to Discuss Project Concerns**

Hi [Supervisor's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to request a meeting to discuss some concerns I have regarding our current project. I believe there may be some issues that need to be addressed, and I would like to discuss them with you in person.

If possible, could we schedule a meeting for sometime this week? I am available on [insert your availability here]. Please let me know if any of these times work for you, or if you would prefer to schedule a different time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.
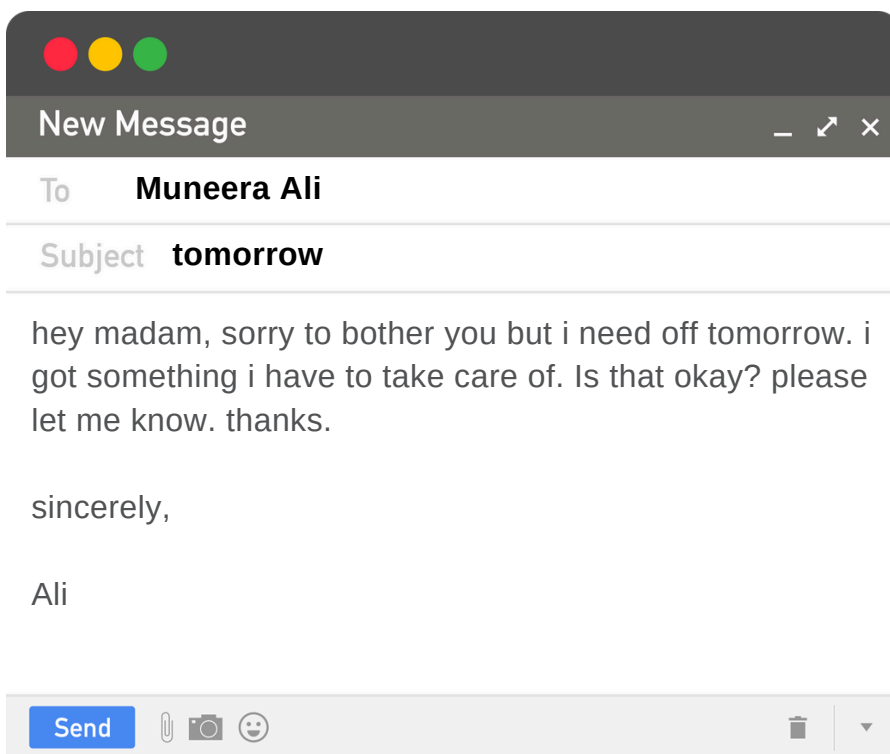
Best regards,

John

Send

Analysis of the Emails

The revised version of the email is an improvement because it addresses the concerns more directly and respectfully than the original email. The subject line is specific and to the point, providing the reader with a clear understanding of the purpose of the email. The tone is professional and respectful, with the use of a formal greeting and closing.

Additionally, the revised version provides specific details about the issues at hand, which helps the reader better understand the situation and be prepared for the meeting. The use of polite and respectful language throughout the email also shows the intern's willingness to work collaboratively and seek the Supervisor's guidance in addressing the concerns.

Example 2: Intern Requesting a Day Off

New Message   _ ↗ ✕

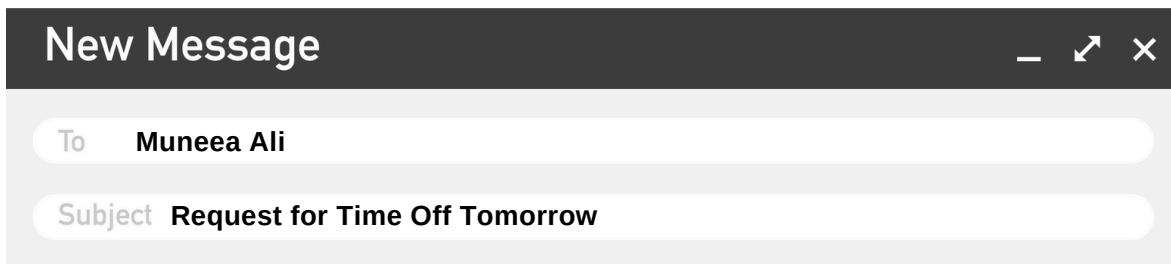To   **Muneera Ali**

Subject   **tomorrow**

hey madam, sorry to bother you but i need off tomorrow. i got something i have to take care of. Is that okay? please let me know. thanks.

sincerely,

Ali

Send   📎 📷 🙂   🗑 ▾

Example 2: Revised

New Message   _ ↗ ✕

To   **Muneea Ali**

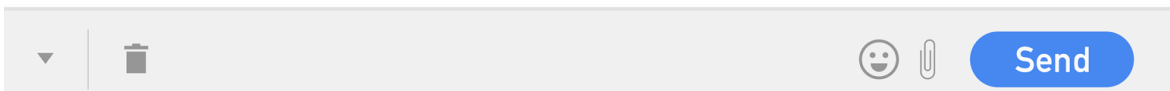Subject   **Request for Time Off Tomorrow**

Hi Muneera,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to request time off from work tomorrow.

I have a personal matter that I need to attend to and I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. If it is possible, I would like to request the day off with your approval. If there are any urgent tasks or responsibilities that require my attention, I am happy to complete them before or after my absence.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Please let me know if there are any further steps I need to take in order to make this request.
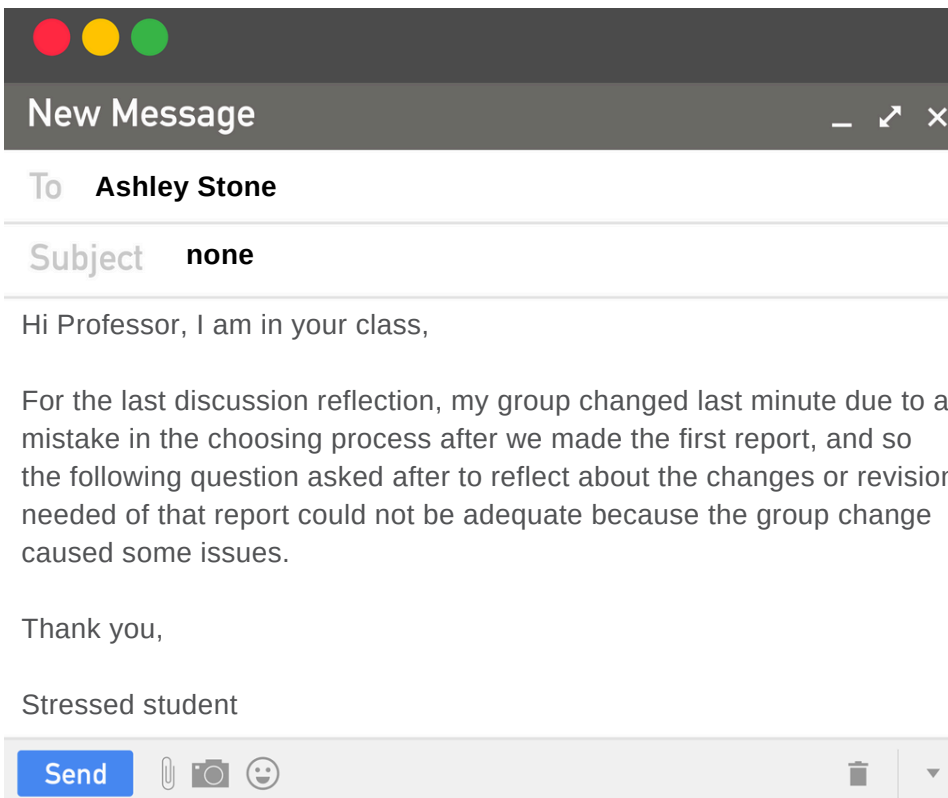
Best regards,
Ali

Analysis of the Emails

The revised email is an improvement because it is more formal, and respectful, and provides more detail using proper grammar. The subject line of the revised email is specific and clearly states the request for time off. The opening line is polite and professional, and the intern explains the reason for the request, apologizes for any inconvenience, and offers to complete any urgent tasks or responsibilities beforehand. The revised email also shows the intern's consideration for the manager's workload by asking if there are any further steps needed to approve the request. Overall, the revised email is more effective in communicating the request and showing respect for the manager's time and responsibilities.

Let's Try This Out!
How Would You Improve This Email?

New Message

To **Ashley Stone**

Subject **none**

Hi Professor, I am in your class,

For the last discussion reflection, my group changed last minute due to a mistake in the choosing process after we made the first report, and so the following question asked after to reflect about the changes or revision needed of that report could not be adequate because the group change caused some issues.

Thank you,

Stressed student

Feedback

The email to the Professor lacks a formal greeting and context, uses unclear language, and lacks clarity about what the student is requesting (e.g. what class?). To improve, the student should start with a proper greeting, provide context for the request, use clear and concise language, and clearly state what they are asking from the Professor. They should also include their student number and always email from their TMU email address.

Visit the Business Career Hub

Employer Events

The BCH hosts several employer events to prepare you for your professional career. Refer to your weekly 'BCH Careers Newsletter' for a list of upcoming events.

Bootcamps & Prep Programs

Advance your technical and soft skills, earn digital badges, and gain an advantage in today's workforce through Bootcamps. Click here to register for current bootcamps.

Coaching & Mock Interview

For career coaching, interview prep and more, schedule a 1:1 appointment with a Career Consultant or a Co-op Coordinator.

TedRogersBCH   Business Career Hub Website   TedRogersBCH

Staff Contributor
Asher Ghaffar
Asher, a Writing Specialist with the Program Advising and Student Success (PASS) team at TRSM, is an award-winning writer and scholar with 10+ years of experience working in higher education.

Student Contributor
Muneera Ali
Muneera is a 3rd-year Business Technology Management student working as a Project Coordinator at the Business Career Hub. She is interested in self-development, gaining meaningful experiences, and strives to pursue a career in the ever expanding field of Information Technology.

References

MacLennan, J. (2009). Effective communication for the technical professions. Oxford University Press.