

## KEY POINTS

The length, layout, and formatting you use can make a world of difference to the clarity of your emails. Short emails are easier to read. The chance of getting a complete reply to your message is higher if you use good structure. Follow these methods and your emails will be better laid out and easier to read than most of the others in your recipient's inbox. At the end of the section, there is an assessment so you can see how well you're applying these to your own emails.

### SHORT EMAILS ARE BETTER EMAILS

To make your emails as short as possible, include the following information and nothing more:

- The topic and purpose of the email;
- What specific action or response you want them to do;
- The time frame in which to do it;
- Just enough detail for them to understand the situation and move ahead with whatever they need to do; and/or
- Nothing that gets in the way or confuses the topic or purpose.

### WHITE SPACE, BULLETS, NUMBERED LISTS, & HEADINGS

- Longer and/or complex/multi-topic emails need *more* structure.
- Include white space between paragraphs and keep paragraphs short.
- Use text formatting to call attention to key information.
- Put all lists in bullet point format or use a numbered list.
- Numbered lists help people reply faster.
- In long emails, use headings to break up and organize the message.

## MAKE ALL QUESTIONS, ACTIONS, & DECISIONS STAND OUT

- Put them on their own lines.
- Label them and use formatting (e.g., bold text).
- In group emails state the name of the person/people it is directed to.
- When replying, repeat questions from other people's emails.

### GRAPHICS

Graphics can help convey a message clearly, but they don't always download, open, or display correctly on mobile devices. If you want to use graphics, make sure you:

- Add the image as an attachment instead of embedding it in the email; and
- Only add images if it adds value and strengthens the message.

### ATTACHMENTS & HYPERLINKS

Use attachments and links for supplemental details to keep emails short and follow these rules:

- **DO** tell the recipient why there is an attachment.
- **DO** say what's in the attachment.
- **DO** say why they need to read it.
- **DO** name attachments clearly.
- **DON'T** leave key information in the attachment (**DO** add it to the email).
- **DO** use clickable hyperlinks instead of text URL.
- **DO** place the hyperlinks in the relevant places in the body of the email (**DON'T** list them all in one place).