

SECTION 2 – LENGTH, LAYOUT & FORMATTING

ACTIVITY: CAN YOU MAKE YOUR EMAILS SHORTER?

Find a long email you've sent recently. It needs to be the first email in a conversation and not a reply. If you haven't sent anything long, you can use a long email you've received from someone else.

Look to see if any of the following things are in the email:

- Background information.
- Explanations saying why you are asking a question.
- Justifications for actions already taken.
- Step-by-step descriptions instead of summaries.
- Information not directly linked to the email purpose.

If you have included any of these items, consider what would happen if you took them out:

- Would the core message be the same?
- Would the email be clearer?
- Would the reader still know what they needed to do?

If your answers to the second set of questions are all YES, then you have found something you can remove and still have a clear email.

This evaluation not only helps review old emails to find what could be improved but also works for evaluating emails you will write in the future. If the email you are writing is long, repeat the activity above before hitting Send to see if there is anything you can remove.

