EMAIL TO AND FROM POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Email is how individuals send and receive most written communication. It is essential to a job search, and to many jobs.

Setting up an email account is free and fairly easy, though if you have not done it before you may need a little help. The most popular free email services are Google's Gmail, Microsoft's Outlook, and Yahoo Mail. If you would like to learn more, the Goodwill Community Foundation's Learn Free - Email Basics at http://www.gcflearnfree.org/topics/emailbasics is a good place to start.

You might communicate with an employer by email several times before you receive a job offer. Keep these DOs and DON'Ts in mind:

1. DO consider setting up an email account that you will only use to communicate with employers. If you use one email account for communicating with friends and family as well as with employers, there may be a chance that an email inviting you for a job interview will get lost among twenty emails about cute pictures of cats.

2. Whatever email account you use for your job search, DO remember that you need to check your in box at least once each day, just like the messages on your phone.

3. When choosing a username for your email account, DO remember that you need to convey a serious, responsible image. A username like PartyMonster@yippeedippeedoo.com probably won't do that.

4. When emailing an employer about a particular job opening, DO include the job name and, if possible, the job number in the Subject line.

5. Emails tend to be more casual than business letters, but DO remember that a little polite formality never hurts. When emailing an employer, begin with "Dear" or "Hello" (Mr. or Ms.) _____:

6. DO always be brief, courteous, and to the point.

7. At the end of each email, DO add your first and last name, your phone number, and your email address. Why include your email address, when the person you are emailing could simply hit "reply"? That person may forward your email to others, and you want it to be as easy as possible for any of them to get in touch with you.

8. If you have received instructions from the employer about how to proceed with your application, DO follow them carefully.

9. If you have a smartphone, use it to read email from employers, but DO NOT use it to send email to them. Most of us don't type very well with our thumbs, and it's important to avoid giving the impression that you don't care about making mistakes. Reply as soon as possible, but use a keyboard.

10. DO re-read your message — several times, and out loud if necessary — before you hit Send. Be sure that your message is clear, and that your spelling and grammar are correct. If someone else can also read through your message for you, that's usually a good idea.

11. DO always conclude your message by briefly expressing your appreciation to the employer — for example, "Thank you for your consideration."

12. If you are attaching your resume, references, or other Microsoft Word documents to your email, DO save them and then attach them as plain document format ("PDF") files. PDF files are less likely than Word files to be accidentally messed up.

13. DO NOT copy ("CC") more than one person on an email to an employer, unless you are sending information that will be helpful to two or three other people at the same employer. Don't send a blind copy ("BCC") to anyone. It might make you appear sneaky.

14. A day or two after you interview with an employer, DO send a short, separate thank-you email to each person you met during your visit (yes, including the receptionist or secretary). If they don't offer you their email addresses during the interview, ask for them before you leave.

15. If you don't hear from an employer within 2-3 weeks after an interview, DO NOT send an email asking why. Simply call the employer and politely ask if they need anything further to evaluate your application. Leave a short message if you cannot reach the person who interviewed you, and include your phone number. If you still don't hear back, just let it go.

16. If you learn that you are not being hired for a job you expected to get, you may feel angry or upset. DO NOT choose that moment to send an email (or any other communication) to the employer. Wait a while, then send the person who interviewed you a short email thanking them for considering your application, and expressing the hope that you may someday have a chance to work together.

17. If you already have a job and are trying to find a better one, DO NOT use your current work email account for your job search.

18. DO consider using your email as a handy place to store documents and information. For example, if you are at a public computer and find a good job posting, copy the link and send it to your email address so you can easily go back to it later. Or if you have just updated your resume or your job search record in Microsoft Word or Excel, email the updated version to yourself so you can open it from other locations. If you receive a call from an employer and can't make notes, send an email to yourself so you won't forget who the call was from or how you need to respond.

19. As with all usernames and passwords, DO keep a written record of your email password. But DO NOT keep it on a computer or other internet-connected device that can be hacked, and DO NOT carry it in your wallet, purse, or cell phone, where it can be lost or stolen. For some things, the best technology is still paper, pencil, and a drawer.

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