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# Composing Online: Social Is Sexy but Email Still Rules in the Workplace

Why Students Need Practice in Composing Professional Emails

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"Social may be sexy, but email delivers.". (Yagi Studio/Getty Images)

By [Richard Nordquist](#)

"Our students don't use [email](#)," a colleague remarked recently. And for the most part, she's right.

According to a [Pew Research report](#), the primary mode of electronic [communication](#) among teens is [texting](#). Two-thirds of American teenagers say they rely on text messaging to stay in touch with friends. In contrast, "More than half (54%)

of all teens now say they *never* use email."

So does that mean email is going the way of the dodo and the [personal letter](#)?

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political fund-raising.

Not just yet--and especially not in the workplace, where email is still the most common form of written communication. [Jeff Sonderman](#) of the Poynter Institute notes that email "remains the standard for private, direct exchanges between small groups of adults." This is true despite the rapid rise of social media and company messaging systems.

This is also true despite the shift from PCs to tablets and smartphones. For professional workers, the most popular activity on handheld devices is sending and receiving emails--and not just between colleagues. Consider these examples of the continuing importance of email in sales, marketing, and

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- **Sales**

*Although social media is ideal for promotion and building awareness, it does not always work well to get customers to act. For many digital businesses like ours, email remains the*

*most powerful tool to close the sale and gain paying customers.*

(Jeff Cornwall, "[Why Email Marketing Is More Effective Than Social Media.](#)" *Forbes*, October 24, 2015)

- **Politicking**

*While the [political] campaigns are using newer social media to drive home their message, old-fashioned email addresses are still crucial to fundraising.*

*"Nothing comes close," to an email list, said Michael Beach, co-founder of Targeted Victory, a digital campaign firm that works with Republicans. . . .*

*"There was a lot of investment in email marketing in 2012; there's going to be even more in 2016," said Fluent's Chief Marketing Officer Jordan Cohen.*

(James Doubek, "[Political Campaigns Go Social, but Email Is Still King.](#)" *NPR*, July 28, 2015)

- **Marketing**

*Yes folks, social may be sexy, but email delivers—in terms of both customer acquisition and retention. . . .*

*"Email marketing is a proven tactic for small business and one that continues to be heavily used despite the rise of numerous other channels," said Greg Sterling, vice president of strategy and insights at Local Search Association.*

(Heather Clancy, "[Email Marketing Is Alive and Well, at Least for Now.](#)" *Fortune*, June 15, 2015)

- **The Killer App**

*Email was the original killer app, and I think it still is. . . . Email is personal, it doesn't stream by and disappear, it's universal, and it works. The inbox is really the perfect place for your daily dose of news. And newsletters are hot again. Scientists say that the last surviving creatures on Earth will be microbes. I predict that the last living microbe will die just after sending an email.*

(Editor Dave Pell, interviewed by Kavi Gupta in "[Dave Pell of NextDraft: Email Is Still a Killer App, and Newsletters Are Hot Again.](#)" *Forbes*, December 15, 2014)

What all this means for today's students is that before entering the business world they need to learn how to [compose](#) effective emails--messages that are *clear, concise, considerate, and correct*. British educators Sue Jackson and Penny Jane Burke make the point that students require practice in presenting their ideas in forms other than conventional [essays](#).

*Emails have their own conventions; often they are seen as [informal](#), yet there is a certain social etiquette about ways of writing an email in professional contexts. The email written in the work context is usually structured, [organised](#) around key points, polite and considerate and written for a specific [purpose](#), with a key [theme](#) identified in the [subject heading](#). Furthermore, emails often appear on the surface to be intimate and private communications, but can be forwarded to others and used as*

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(*Reconceptualising Lifelong Learning: Feminist Interventions*. Routledge, 2007)

To begin *these* lessons in composition, see our [10 Tips on How to Write a Professional Email](#).

## Related Articles

- [Advice for Writing Effectively on the Job](#)
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# How to Writing Effectively on the Job

Professional Communication Skills

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(Daly and Newton/Getty Images)

By [Richard Nordquist](#)

*For the majority of writers making the difficult transition from writing in college to writing on the job, learning to analyze each new communication situation and adapt to it is essential to effective professional communication.*

(Michael L. Keene, *Effective Professional and Technical Writing*)

In almost every profession these days, effective [communication](#) is a critical skill. At least that's what managers, recruiters, and career counselors keep telling us.

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In fact, effective communication is a *combination* of critical skills, and here are 10 articles that will show you how to improve them.

- [10 Tips on How to Write a Professional Email](#)

Email is the most common form of written communication in the business world. It's also the most commonly abused. Too often email messages

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snap, growl, and bark--as if being concise meant that you had to sound bossy. Not so. . . . [Read more](#)

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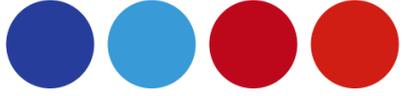
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