Netiquette in emails

Safety

- **An unencrypted e-mail only contains information that you would write on a postcard!**
  With today's software and hardware technology, sending e-mails is not safe from the eyes of unauthorized persons. Therefore, do not write anything in an e-mail that you would not write on a postcard. For confidential information, use common encryption systems (e.g. PGP), but you should be careful to comply with any regulations of your employer and the country in which you are located.
- **The recipient could be discreet - but it doesn't have to be!**
  Forwarding e-mails is very easy and thanks to the lack of personal characteristics, moral hurdles are often lower than with normal letters. Keep this in mind when writing sensitive content, such as complaining about someone or leaking secrets. Maybe the recipient of your email knows the same person as you and is informed of your opinion through the back door. Or don't you occasionally wonder how the press gets e-mails written by bosses of large companies to their own employees?
- **Always be suspicious!**
  As long as e-mails are not one hundred percent secure, e-mails (and also Netnews contributions) will be the target of forgeries. Check the wording of each e-mail to see if it can really be from the specified sender. Pay special attention to unknown or incorrectly declared attachments. A common scam is, for example, to fool unsuspecting e-mail recipients into believing a fictitious invoice and attaching a file that in reality does not contain the invoice, but an executable program with a malicious function.

Addressing

- **Think about who you could contact if you have specific questions!**
  Consider who to contact for assistance. There may be someone you know who can help you with software or system problems. You should also know who to contact if you receive anything questionable or forbidden by email. Most web pages also have a "postmaster" to whom you can send appropriate e-mails if you have questions about the services offered there.
- **Send general inquiries to generic email addresses!**
  Many companies have so-called generic e-mail addresses for central facilities, e.g. "kundenservice@firma" etc. Be sure to use such addresses if you want to reach departments in this way, because then you may be making your request not only to one person (who may be on vacation for four weeks), but to several at the same time. But be careful not to send personal things to generic email addresses!
- **Pay attention to the reply addresses when replying!**
  Be careful when replying to an email. Some addresses are set up for a group of several people, although they might seem like you're just for one person.
- **Pay attention to the recipients as email discussions progress!**
  Pay attention to the forwarding options ("CC") in email discussions. Don't forward emails to multiple people at once if the email discussion has turned into a two-man conversation.

Content

- **Respect the copyrights of others!**
  Respect copyright claims of reproduced material. The Internet is not a legal vacuum, and almost all countries have well-defined copyright laws that govern the reproduction of material.
- **Never send chain letters!**
  Chain letters are undesirable on the Internet, as they can hinder data traffic enormously and often circulate on the net for years due to the lack of an "expiration date". Write back to the sender of a chain letter so that he does not spread the chain letter further.
- **Do not ask simple questions tothe management!**
  In general, people who use the Internet have little time to answer questions about the Internet and how it works. Therefore, do not send simple questions to people whose names you have found in official documents, RFC or mailing lists, but to people who match the topic and the quality of the question.
- **Beware of contradictory statements and sarcasm!**
  Always remember that a recipient of your email is someone who may have different ideas about culture, language, and humor. In particular, date formats, units of measurement and idioms are often difficult to translate linguistically. Be especially careful with sarcasm.
- **Keep it short!**
  Keep it short without getting scarce. When answering a question, include only enough original material for your answer to be understood, nothing more. It seems extremely bad to reply to a question and simply attach the full text of the email that contained the question. Work out all relevant parts and answer directly below each question. Unless you're writing to a group of people, such as a customer service department, because then:
- **Preserve context when sending to generic email addresses!**
  If you write to a department and this develops into correspondence, please be sure to keep the context of the discussion so that another employee can look at the course of the discussion and react to it individually.
- **Never send mass e-mails without being asked!**
  Do not send unsolicited e-mail to a large number of recipients.
- **Be careful when sending an attached file to several recipients at the same time!**
  Sending a large file to several recipients at the same time creates a load on the sending mail server that should not be underestimated. Therefore, before sending, consider whether you could better send the file to be sent to the recipient in another way, for example by making it available on an FTP or web server.
- **Do not send unsolicited advertising!**
  The costs for the transmission of e-mails, if one looks at the Internet soberly, are borne by the users, in which they pay their providers for their Internet access and this money maintains, among other things, transmission paths. This system is fundamentally different from conventional transmission systems, such as normal mail, television or radio. Sending someone an email also costs them bandwidth on their network, disk space, or CPU time. This is the most fundamental reason why unsolicited e-mail advertising on the Internet is undesirable, and in many areas also prohibited.

- **Write content, not blank emails!**
  Avoid e-mails that do not contain your own text. For example, if you forward a file or e-mail as an attachment, you should write a short, explanatory text about it so that the recipient can already read from the normal e-mail text what is waiting for him in the attachment. Also keep in mind that modern spam filters classify emails without text quite differently than emails with.

External shape

- **Always write a subject line!**
  E-mails should always contain a subject line that clearly indicates the content of the e-mail. Your recipient will appreciate a unique subject if they have to sift through dozens of emails a day and know what it's all about as soon as they look at the subject.
- **Announce long emails in the subject line!**
  Don't surprise email recipients with unsolicited, overlong emails. It's a friendly gesture to include the word "LONG" in the subject line for overly long emails so that the recipient can see that it might take some time to read and reply to your email. An e-mail is considered overlong from about 100 lines of content.
- **Maximum 72 characters per line!**
  You should write a maximum of 72 characters per line and end each line with a line break. If necessary, set up e-mail programs so that a text is automatically wrapped in column 72 at the latest for outgoing e-mails.
- **Avoid special characters!**
  Do not use special characters or non-ASCII attachments in your e-mails if they are not MIME-encoded and/or encoded accordingly by your e-mail program. If you're sending coded emails, make sure the recipient can decrypt them.
- **Avoid HTML formatting!**
  If possible, you should also avoid HTML formatting in your emails. Many e-mail programs cannot interpret HTML at all or only to a very limited extent. Some e-mail programs also send an e-mail with normal text in an HTML-formatted version. You should definitely disable this, as such emails become unnecessarily large.
- **Use upper and lower case!**
  It is case-sensitive. PURE CAPITALIZATION LOOKS AS IF THEY WERE SCREAMING, consistent lowercase testifies to convenience.
- **Use symbols for emphasis!**
  If you want to emphasize something, you should put the corresponding phrases in asterisks ("This *is* what I mean"). Use underscores before and after it to underline something ("_Krieg and Frieden_ is my favorite book").
- **Show your moods!**
  Use emoticons to show your tone of voice, but use them sparingly. But don't assume that the presence of an emoticon automatically makes the recipient of your email happy or wipes an offensive comment off the table. Also inappropriate are emoticons usually in business mail.
- **Add a signature to your emails!**
  Make it easier for the recipient: Although all e-mail programs automatically place your sender address in the message header of every e-mail sent, you should attach information about yourself at the foot of your e-mails (at least name, place of

residence, e-mail and possibly WWW address). This is already made possible by many e-mail programs; this function is called "signature". A signature is separated from the body of the e-mail with two hyphens and a space (!). The following text in the signature should not exceed 72 characters per line and should not be longer than 4 lines in total.

-- This is a signature.

- **Don't thoughtlessly add files to emails!**
  Before sending files by e-mail, consider whether the recipient really wants this file. Always keep an eye on the size of your email to be sent. Inserted graphics or programs inflate an e-mail in such a way that it can either not be transmitted at all or only with massive resource consumption. An indication of the maximum file size in emails is 500 kilobytes. For larger files, consider transferring directly from computer to computer, or divide a large file into small bits and pieces to email them individually. Also note that many mail servers have receiving restrictions on certain mail sizes.

Forwarding of e-mails

- **Pay attention to the status of an email! If an e-mail is addressed directly to a person**
  (for example, recognizable by the fact that the e-mail is addressed to a personal e-mail address or the recipient is addressed personally), you should assume that the sender only wanted to write to this person. Therefore, ask the sender for consent if you want to forward his mail to third parties.
- **Beware of automatic redirects when you are away! Even in the**
  case of automatic forwarding in absence, the secrecy of a sender must be observed. Therefore, do not forward your e-mails to another recipient when you are absent, but send each sender an out-of-office message in which you explain that you are not reading the message at this time, that the message will not be forwarded and provide contact addresses of contact persons who can be contacted in an emergency.
- **Do not change the wording for redirects!**
  Do not change the wording when forwarding or resending an e-mail. Also, only publish a private email if the sender expressly agrees. When shortening the text, be careful not to change the meaning of the word.
- **Beware of email loops!**
  Beware of dreaded forwarding loops if your email system allows forwarding. Make sure you don't have redirects installed on different machines, otherwise an email to you will end up in an endless loop from one computer to the next, and so on.

Responding to emails

- **Keep the recipient context when replying to emails sent to generic email addresses!**
  When processing emails sent to a generic email address, it is important to preserve context. For example, suppose a customer sent an email to the generic customer service email address. This e-mail is automatically distributed by the mail server to all recipients of the group in question. An employee answers this e-mail. So that all

other employees are now informed about this answer, the answering machine should also send his answer via CC to the generic e-mail address.

- **Do not publish internal redirects!**
  If a customer request is forwarded several times in the house, the person who ultimately writes back to the customer should make sure that not all internal communication is forwarded.

- **Write conservatively, read liberally!**
  A proven rule of conduct: *Be conservative when writing emails, liberal when reading.* Do not overheat replies to provocative mails (so-called "flames"), even if you have been provoked. It is better to read conflicting e-mails several times, perhaps the sender has expressed himself misleadingly.

- **First read all emails, then write!**
  In general, it's a good idea to review all incoming emails before replying to an email. Sometimes people want to apologize to you for previously sent emails (e.g. that were incorrectly addressed to you or were written more or less rashly).

- **Don't answer overheated!**
  Sleep over a received email before writing an emotional response. If you still have strong emotions about the email, mark them in your reply with FLAME ON/OFF. For example:

  FLAME ONThis arguments are not worth the bandwidth they need to be sent. They are illogical and unfounded. The rest of the world probably agrees with me. FLAME OFF

- **Inform the sender if it takes longer to answer their questions!**
  If you think that an e-mail is particularly important, but you need time to reply, notify the sender that you have received his e-mail and that you will answer it in detail soon.

Business e-mail traffic

- **Write authoritatively and correctly!**
  Avoid sending private mail from your business email account, composing internal messages with a flippant tone, or not reacting to internal communication processes as agreed. Very quickly, content from internal redirects is also forwarded to the public and can possibly cause great damage to your position and the company in the case of sensitive content.

- **Clarify the legal situation of e-mails "from the workplace"!**
  Before using an e-mail account from your employer, clarify your rights and obligations, which may be clarified in your employment contract. Your employer may be able to grant itself the right to restrict or even prohibit your private use of your business e-mail account.

Time difference

- **For distant recipients, note the time difference!**
  Don't forget that your email recipients can live around the globe. If you send an email asking for a quick reply, it may be possible that this email will reach the recipient while they are still sleeping. Therefore, give him the chance to wake up, come to his

workplace and log into the Internet before you assume that the email has not arrived or the recipient does not respond to it.

The Board of Directors

Ownersegg e.V.

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