An email is often the first introduction that you provide someone. It is important to be professional, direct, and courteous in order to leave a good first impression.

An email has six elements to it that you should think about in order to communicate what you want effectively. Below is the list of the elements and tips for how you should think about them.

Elements of an Email

1. To/Cc/Bcc
2. Subject
3. Greeting
4. Body Text
5. Salutation
6. Signature

1. To/CC/BCC

“To”
This is for the person(s) that the email is specifically meant for. These are the people that you will be expecting to respond to the email.

“CC”
“CC:,” or carbon copy, is where you add people who should receive the information in the email but who are not primary recipients. If anyone replies with the “Reply All” function, those that have been CC’d will see the response.

“BCC”
Blind carbon copy (BCC) is used to email large groups without revealing everyone’s contact information. Additionally, you can use this option when you would like to include someone on an email so they have the information of the email, but others in the dialogue cannot see that you included that person. It allows you to disseminate information without having to worry if responses will go to other parties; the responses will only come back to you.
2. Subject

Subject lines can determine whether your email will be read. Busy people need to know what they are going to be reading in an email and whether it is really important for them to read or not. The subject line gives you a good idea of what the email is about, even if you were not expecting the email in the first place.

Tips:
- Keep the subject line less than 40 characters.
- Immediately let the receiver know what the email will contain.
- Put the action you want at the beginning of the subject.
- Include the time, date and location for meeting reminder emails.
- Don’t use punctuation, except for clarification. It is not a sentence.

Example Subjects
- Speaking at a Garden Workshop
- Office Meeting 7/12 3:30, Arbol De La Vida
- Recycling Proposal: Basketball
- Meatless Monday in the Union

3. Greetings

In order to properly address an email, you might need to do additional research. There are many titles that are used for individuals in a university setting.

Tips:
- It is always better to address faculty as a Dr. when you cannot figure out whether they have a doctorate degree (PhD). It is better to compliment someone than insult someone by not recognizing a degree they have worked very hard for.
- Mrs. indicates that a woman is married, while Ms. does not have that implication; if you are unaware of a woman’s marital status, start the greeting with Ms. (unless she is a Dr.).
- If you are unsure what title to use, just write the person’s full name in the greeting.

It is also important to start the email professionally.

Examples:
- Traditional: Dear Dr. Smith,
- Plain: Dr. Smith,
- Non-Specific: To Whom It May Concern,
- Unless you know the recipient well, avoid the informal “Hi Dr. Smith,”
4. Body

The body of an introductory email has four parts:
1. Your introduction - State your name and what your position is within the structure of the organization.
2. Why you are sending this email - Introduce your project and what you hope the outcomes of the project will be.
3. The "ask" - State what you specifically want/need from them? What action do you want them to take as a result of them reading your email?
4. Your contact information.

Tips:
- Do not use colors. Stick to black and a standard professional font. No emojis.
- Be succinct and to the point with your message.
- Do not use acronyms unless you know the recipient will know what you are talking about.
- Assume that the recipient is reading the email on a phone between meetings. Make it brief and easy to answer.
- Separate paragraphs, bullet important points, and put a space between each paragraph and heading.
- Once you have the body written, review it and shorten it everywhere you can. The longer your email, the less likely it will be read, let alone responded to.
- Check spelling and grammar before you send it.

Example:

My name is Natalie, and I am a Research Assistant at the University of Arizona’s Office of Sustainability. At the Office of Sustainability, I am writing a guide for students, faculty and staff to help assist them with sustainability projects that they are working on across campus. Additionally, the guide will provide instructions for writing Green Fund grants.

I am contacting you today because I was interested in interviewing you to see what you thought of this guide, and I would like to know what you think needs to be in a guide like this. I know that you are an active student leader on campus, so I thought your opinions would be exceptionally valuable.

I am free to meet with you within the next week or so. Would you be interested in meeting with me to talk about my project? The meeting should not last more than an hour. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns please feel free to contact me by email at researchassistant@email.arizona.edu or by phone at (520) 000-0000. I look forward to hearing from you.
5. Closing

The closing is written based on personal preference. You want to keep it short and have it indicate the end of your email. Keep it formal; “Cheers”, “Best Wishes”, and “Yours” might be getting too informal.

Examples:
- Thank you,
- Best regards,
- Sincerely,

6. Signature

The basic components of a signature generally include:
- Full Name
- Title, Group Name
- Academics
- Phone & Email

Although this format would be ideal, you do not want it to get too long. You might have multiple titles and degrees, but this is not the place for your resume so you might not get to include everything.

Poorly Written Example:
Natalie
Research Assistant University of Arizona, Office of Sustainability
Curriculum Director, Sierra Club
University of Arizona- The Honors College
B.S. Environmental Science
B.A. Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law
Email: researchassistant@email.arizona.edu
Phone: (520)000-0000

Well Written Example:
Natalie Lucas
Research Assistant University of Arizona, Office of Sustainability
Phone: (520)000-0000
Email: researchassistant@email.arizona.edu
Helpful Hints:

- If you are writing emails past 11:00 pm do not send the email until at least 6:00 am.
- If you are dealing with a busy administrator, follow up your email with a phone call.
- Save the email in your drafts. Read over your email to make sure that you do not have any grammar or content mistakes.
- If the recipient does not answer the email or phone calls, then go to his/her office.