



Northeastern University

TELEPHONE AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Please note: these suggestions apply to all situations in which you are communicating with individuals who are NOT part of your immediate family or group of close friends.

- Know your audience and choose an appropriate tone in addressing this audience. It is always best to err on the side of formality until you are invited to use more familiar terms. Address individuals in a respectful manner (Professor Jones, Ms. Smith) - do not use first names until given permission. Do not shorten first names without permission (use Daniel, rather than Dan, for example).
- Identify yourself, on the phone and in email, by your first and last name. It is likely that your contact knows more than one person with your first name.
- Make an effort to use proper grammar and standard English, both in speech and in writing.
- Remember your manners – always say “please” and “thank-you” when appropriate.

Telephone:

- Listen to your voicemail greeting. Is the content of your message appropriate for all callers? Do you identify yourself clearly? Does your voice convey an acceptable image of yourself to faculty members or prospective employers? Do you speak at a reasonable speed, not too fast; not too slowly)?
- When leaving a message for others (answering machines, voicemail), enunciate and speak slowly. If the recipient has to play your message several times to understand your name or to copy down your number, you’ve made an immediate bad impression. Remember to identify yourself, by your first and last name.
- Cell phone signals can be unpredictable. If you left a message for someone, and your call is not returned within a few days, call again. Do not assume that the recipient was able to hear your message clearly.
- Check messages often and return *all* phone calls promptly.
- When making a request, remember that impressions are formed the moment someone hears your voice, whether recorded or “live”.

Voice Mail Communication

- Use your NEU email address or another conservative email address. Reserve clever or personal email addresses for friends and family.
- Make sure the subject line relates to the content of your email.
- Exercise caution and discretion when using “cc”, “bcc” and “Reply to all”.
- Begin the email with a polite salutation, such as Dear Professor Jones, or Hello Ms. Smith. Do not use “Hey”
- Make requests or ask questions politely; do not make commands.
- Use standard punctuation and capitalization. Spell-check every message.
- Avoid profanity and vulgar slang.
- Reread every message before sending, checking for appropriate tone and for clarity.
- **When you write an email in a state of duress, delay sending the email - review the tone and content when you are not so stressed out.**
- Sign your name with a respectful closing, such as “Thanks” or “Sincerely”.
- Remember that company email belongs to the company and is not necessarily private. Do not write anything that you would be ashamed to speak out loud.
- Use work email for business purposes only.
- Save professional emails for future reference and documentation.