



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### Email Etiquette

Since we all struggle with information stores (ISs) that are too large to back up, and there are too few good solutions to make them smaller (there are several good archival/vaulting solutions available that support Exchange), there are some rules of etiquette everyone should practice and bad habits that everyone should avoid. Most of us work under the basic rule that all messages must be answered and organized. This is hard to achieve when you receive hundreds of messages each day. To aid in this quest, the following email etiquette tips have been compiled from various sources.

#### Sender Etiquette

1. An effective subject line is paramount. A good subject line helps you and your message recipients view, file, search, and prioritize messages efficiently. No one likes having an inbox full of messages with a subject line starting with URGENT or FYI. Subjects should state exactly what the message is about and nothing more - most recipients can prioritize messages for themselves.
2. Be succinct. Try to limit message text to one screen (this varies by client and resolution, of course) so the reader can quickly peruse the message for highlights and main points. Also, stay on topic and avoid long dialogs or discussions via email.
3. Use "Reply All" with caution. In some situations, this option is necessary because all recipients need your response. However, a Reply All with the message body "Thanks" probably doesn't need to go to everyone. Closely related to Reply All is the distribution list (DL). Make sure you use DLs with care, and when you see that a large DL has been used, ask yourself whether everyone needs your response before you click the Reply All button.
4. Limit the use and size of attachments. Attachments aren't evil by nature - you just need to use them with care. When you add an attachment to a message, consider whether there is an alternative. For example, can you put the attachment on a server and provide a URL (<http://server/file>) or UNC (\\server\share) instead?
5. Use Signatures – but please don't use the 10MB GIF file of your company logo!

#### Receiver Etiquette

1. Establish email time. Email time is like naptime in kindergarten. Set aside regular periods during the day when you can read and respond to your email traffic.
2. Organize your inbox. Create subfolders and organize your email into these folders. You can also use a personal store (.pst file) with Outlook, but be aware of its caveats (backup, size, items).
3. Use archiving and delete unneeded messages, replies and acknowledgments. Manage your deleted items folder by cleaning it out manually or simply deleting all items when you exit.



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4. Use Inbox rules sparingly. Rules contribute to email mayhem and create unnecessary overhead on the client and server. If you can get away with it, don't use Inbox rules at all.
5. Don't oversubscribe. We're all tempted to subscribe to mailing lists and email newsletters that interest us. Make sure that you subscribe to only those that you really have the time to read or are interested in. You might want to set up a public folder and subscribe it to the list instead of having every user subscribe individually.

A Utopian solution for email overload doesn't exist, so it will always be a problem. However, by putting some good practices into place, this very useful and business-critical tool can be manageable.