



There's nothing more frustrating than sending out an email into the void and never hearing back. This month, we sat down with Dr. Jesse Miller, Clinical Assistant Professor of Writing at the UB School of Management, to discuss how you can make your point clearly and make it easy as possible for the person you are communicating with to respond.

Whether you're writing to a colleague, an employer, or someone outside of your organization, here are some tips that will help you write emails that make contact and get a response.

1. Use a specific subject line.

Miller advises to skip general or vague subject lines. "The subject line is the first thing a reader sees, and it's how they decide whether to open your email, or set it aside," he says. "Make sure it provides a brief but specific description of what the email is about." No more 'Important information' subject lines—specify the specific important information you're discussing. Also, make sure to avoid using "Re:" in the beginning of your subject if you are not directly responding to an earlier email—it can seem disingenuous.

2. Get to the point.

Don't make your reader struggle to determine why they are receiving this email. "You should always explain your purpose for sending an email in your very first sentence," Miller reminds us. "This way your reader will know why they are receiving the email and what to focus on."

3. Provide an explanation.

If you are writing about a change or asking someone to do something, be sure to explain the reason why. "Don't forget to explain how your reader will benefit or be affected by the change or action," Miller suggests. "They're more likely to have a positive response when they feel like they're a part of the process."

4. Be brief.

The longer your email, the more likely your reader will skim through, missing essential details. Stay focused and don't say more than you need to. You can always follow up with more details, as needed.

When you're writing on multiple topics, Miller suggests that you write short emails on each instead of one long email that discusses them all. Don't make it easy for your reader to skip the most important point or only focus on the topic they're interested in.

4. Move offline.

If all else fails, follow up on your email with a phone call. If they're too busy to talk, see if you can schedule time on their calendar, even if it is only for 15 minutes. That way, you can talk to them in person on their time.

There are many different reasons for not responding to an email, so don't take it personally if it happens to you (especially if it has only occurred once or twice). Your colleague might have a deadline or project that you don't know about, or they might not have an answer for you yet.

Are you experiencing communication problems or stress at work?

You can meet with a Masters-level counselor to discuss any work or life stressors as a part of your EAP benefit. There is no cost for you to access this totally confidential service, and it covers anyone in your household. Call to set up an appointment today.