



If you do either of these things, you will be forcing colleagues to tie up their personal printers and then get stapling. Unless time is extremely short, wouldn't it be more efficient, more considerate and more environmentally friendly (printer cartridges!) to use Print Services to do the repro work in such cases?

#### **Consider your mode of address.**

If you know someone very well and emails are always going backwards and forwards between you, it may be natural to drop any preamble ('Dear Joe', 'Hi') or sign-off ('Regards', 'Thanks'). But in other cases, launching straight into your message and giving no friendly parting shot may be seen as cold if not downright rude. Old-fashioned pleasantries still have their place.

#### **Don't fire off an email in anger.**

It's easy to use email to vent your irritation or administer instant retribution, but you may regret it later. If you have a complaint, wouldn't it be better to go and talk with the person (preferably once you're calm)? Particularly annoying to some people is colleagues' use of capital letters for whole sentences in emails as a sort of electronic shout.

#### **Remember that an email is forever.**

Never put anything in an email that you wouldn't want your boss, your aunt, a lawyer or

the *Daily Muckraker* to see. Even if you delete an email from your 'sent mail' box, it lives on elsewhere. And bear in mind that the Data Protection and Freedom of Information laws apply to emails as well as to paper records.

#### **Make links to the web as convenient as possible.**

If you are including a URL in your email so that the recipient can click on it and go straight to a web site, put angle brackets (< >) around the URL. That way, even if the address goes over to a second line, it will still be 'clickable' and you will save someone cutting and pasting.

#### **Do respond.**

Just because you receive a large volume of email, it's no excuse not to reply to colleagues (but you don't have to use email, of course). When you do reply, enter your text above the sender's message rather than below it to save them unnecessary trawling.

#### **What have we forgotten that's important?**

If you would like to comment on or add to this, please email [pwe-feedback@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pwe-feedback@bristol.ac.uk).

Information Services' *Best practice guide for email use* is available at [www.bristol.ac.uk/is/selfhelp/documentation/email-g3/email-g3.htm](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/is/selfhelp/documentation/email-g3/email-g3.htm)

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## Positive Communications

An initiative is under way to create a more positive working environment (PWE) for all staff. A group of academics and support staff is leading the implementation of an improvement plan drawn up after a major staff survey.

One step the group is taking is to produce a series of advice sheets – called Positive Communications – on issues raised by staff. The advice will always be brief and practical.

## Issue One:

# Making internal email a blessing rather than a curse



# Making internal email a **blessing** rather than a curse

Email is a boon, but some people say it's also making their lives a misery. Perhaps it's the sheer volume of messages. Perhaps it's the tone some of us use when we write them. What could we do to ease the pain and get more of the benefits? Some ideas are offered here. If you have others, please let us know – by email, if you like ([pwe-feedback@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:pwe-feedback@bristol.ac.uk)).



## **Do you really want to send an email?**

Most people agree that face-to-face communication is best. So why do we sometimes email colleagues who work a few metres away? Consider paying them a visit instead – you might get the business done faster and you'll probably do more for your working relationship. If you can't go to see them, how about ringing them up rather than sending them an email? A phone call is often a more efficient way of sorting something out, and it's more personal.

## **Do you need to copy your email to all those other people?**

Because it's so easy to do, some of us are in the habit of copying our messages to all and sundry. If they don't really need it, don't bother them with it.

## **Use 'Reply To' rather than 'Reply All' whenever possible.**

Picture this: you and ten others receive an emailed invitation from Joe to attend a meeting. You reply by giving Joe your apologies and explaining that you have to go to the dentist.

If you've hit 'Reply All', you'll be telling the ten other invitees (as well as Joe) about your teeth. Do they need to know?

## **Avoid unnecessary email tails.**

If you correspond with someone over a period of time, with each of you hitting the 'Reply To' button on every occasion, your old messages will build up into a long tail behind your new ones. If you need to be able to review the course of your correspondence, fair enough; but if not, it's better to shorten the tail and so reduce clogging and the endless repetition of your sign-off information. The 'Create New' button in the reply window will do the trick.

## **Think before attaching large documents to emails aimed at whole groups of people.**

You can help to avoid gumming up cyberspace by putting such documents on the web and just emailing the URLs. But if the documents are for a meeting, it's probably better not to attach them to an email or to put them on the web.