

Strategy: Professional Communication/E-mail Training for Students

As little as two-minutes of e-mail etiquette training for students can improve the professional tone of class e-mails. Data suggests that students don't intentionally send disrespectful messages and are looking for our guidance to communicate more professionally, and these activities can help with that.

Origin

Aguilar-Roca, N., Williams, A., Warrior, R., & O'Dowd, D. K. (2009). Two minute training in class significantly increases the use of professional formatting in student to faculty email correspondence. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 3(1). Retrieved from http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijstol/v3n1/articles/_ODowd_et_al/index.htm.

Application

This process involved face-to-face discussion with students about e-mail protocols for a large lecture course using Power Point slides to provide two minutes of training about professional e-mail use for the course. These are the slides that were used by the authors:

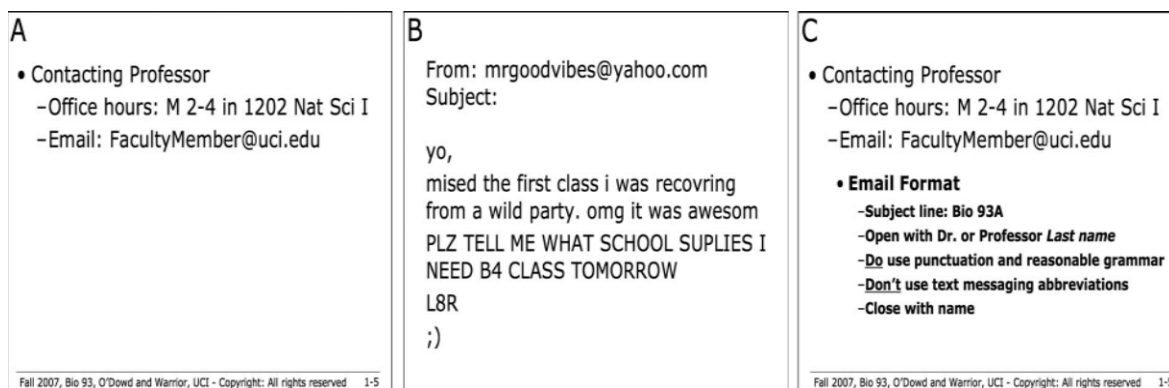


Figure 1. PowerPoint slides used in email etiquette training

The control group viewed only Slide A. The experimental group viewed Slides A, B, and C. This resulted in significantly improved e-mail communication between the students and the instructor.

How to use these Slides:

Slide A contains typical information provided to students about contacting the instructor. Including a humorous example like Slide B with the following verbal description heightens the students' awareness of the challenges of unprofessional e-mails:

"While I try to respond to emails as quickly as possible, I am much less likely to respond to emails like this message from a non-university email account. Since there is no subject, it will not likely catch my attention in my inbox. Notice the lack of proper salutation, the presence of text message abbreviations, and the lack of a proper closing."

After this bit of humor, Slide C can be used to provide students with complete guidelines for professional communication:

"I would like you to use your ISU email address and this format for all e-mails for this course. Include in the subject line (). Open with Dear (). In the body of your e-mail please use full sentences with punctuation and reasonable grammar. Do not use text messaging abbreviations. Finally, always sign your name to your e-mails. I want to encourage you to use this e-mail format in all of your professional interactions, which in the future will include (), (), and (). E-mails that adhere to this conventional format are considered respectful. When e-mailing friends it is perfectly fine to be casual."

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?
- What guidelines will you include in your e-mail training?
- How could you use this training to discuss e-mail content (grade begging, course content, etc.) as well as e-mail format?
- What other areas of the course can benefit from discussion of guidelines for communication?