

THE WORKPLACE PLAYBOOK

Communicate, Influence, and Lead—
One Email at a Time



Sefunmi Fadahunsi

THE WORKPLACE PLAYBOOK

Communicate, Influence, and Lead
—One Email at a Time



SEFUNMI FADAHUNSI

Copyright © 2025

The rights of Sefunmi Fadahunsi to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the copyright laws.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author or publisher.

ISBN: 978-978-695-437-0

Contents

Introduction

Tip 1: Always Add A Subject Line

Tip 2: Make Use Of Relevant Subject Line

Tip 3: Use Your Subject Line To Convey Urgency

Tip 4: Ditch The Formal Letter Format

Tip 5: State Clear Deadlines

Tip 6: Keep It Precise and Brief

Tip 7: With Long Emails, Categorise and Use Bullet Points For Clarity

Tip 8: Your Email Tone

Tip 9: Use Hyperlinks, Not Long URLs

Tip 10: Reply In The Same Thread

Tip 11: Use The Right Reply Options



Contents

Tip 12: Understand when to CC/BCC and when to escalate

Tip 13: Explain why you added or removed someone from the thread

Tip 14: Know when to start a new email thread for a different topic

Tip 15: Proofread Before Hitting Send

Tip 16: Avoid Empty Body of Mails

Tip 17: Forwarding Email Etiquette

Tip 18: Reattach Your Files

Tip 19: Attach First. Write Later

Tip 20: Acknowledge When Needed

Tip 21: Acknowledge The Previous Writer

Tip 22: Rename Your Attachment

Tip 23: When You're Not Sure Of The Recipient's First Or Last Name, Use Both Names

Tip 24: Include Phonetic Pronunciations of Your Name in the Email Signature

Tip 25: Always Include Your Email Signature

Congratulations!





Introduction

When I think back to my early days in the corporate world, I come to the conclusion that before people meet you, they meet your emails. Whether you realise it or not, how you communicate in writing leaves an impression that sticks. It may not be enough to make or break your career overnight, but as the saying goes, first impressions last longer.

In my transition from a junior professional to a senior manager, I've seen how email communication can elevate or hinder a person's career growth. I've also learned firsthand that small mistakes, especially ones that could have been easily avoided, often lead to unnecessary back-and-forth, confusion, or even being overlooked for opportunities. Yet, despite emails being a staple of modern work life, no one teaches us how to maximize them well.

Most people pick it up through trial and error, often forming bad habits along the way.

That's why I'm writing this book to help you get it right from the start. I don't want you to struggle with something as seemingly small yet crucial as email etiquette.

This book isn't just about writing better emails. It's about helping you develop professional habits that make your communication sharp, intentional, and impactful.

With 25 smart, bite-sized tips, each illustrated with real-life scenarios and clean visual examples, this playbook equips you with the tools to:

- Communicate with clarity and confidence
- Coordinate tasks and information more effectively
- Avoid common mistakes that silently damage your reputation
- Reinforce your professionalism in every interaction
- Build trust, drive results, and lead through communication

If you're at the beginning of your career or simply looking to refine your email etiquette, this book is for you. Trust me, learning these skills now will save you from many avoidable struggles down the line.

Let's dive in.
Sefunmi



ALWAYS ADD A SUBJECT LINE

Sending an email with an empty subject line is like mailing a letter without an address. There's a high chance it won't reach the right person or get noticed at all. Imagine a hiring manager scanning through hundreds of emails.

Would they bother opening an email with no subject? Probably not.

A subject line is the first thing your recipient sees. It helps them decide whether to open your email now, later, or never.

Without one, your message could be lost in an overcrowded inbox. Worse, it may look unprofessional or even like spam.

- Catherine & Daughters Limited 5:28 am
(No Subject)
Learn more (<http://c.apple.com/r?v=2&la=en&lc=us&...>)
-

NB: This is an email sample that has no subject

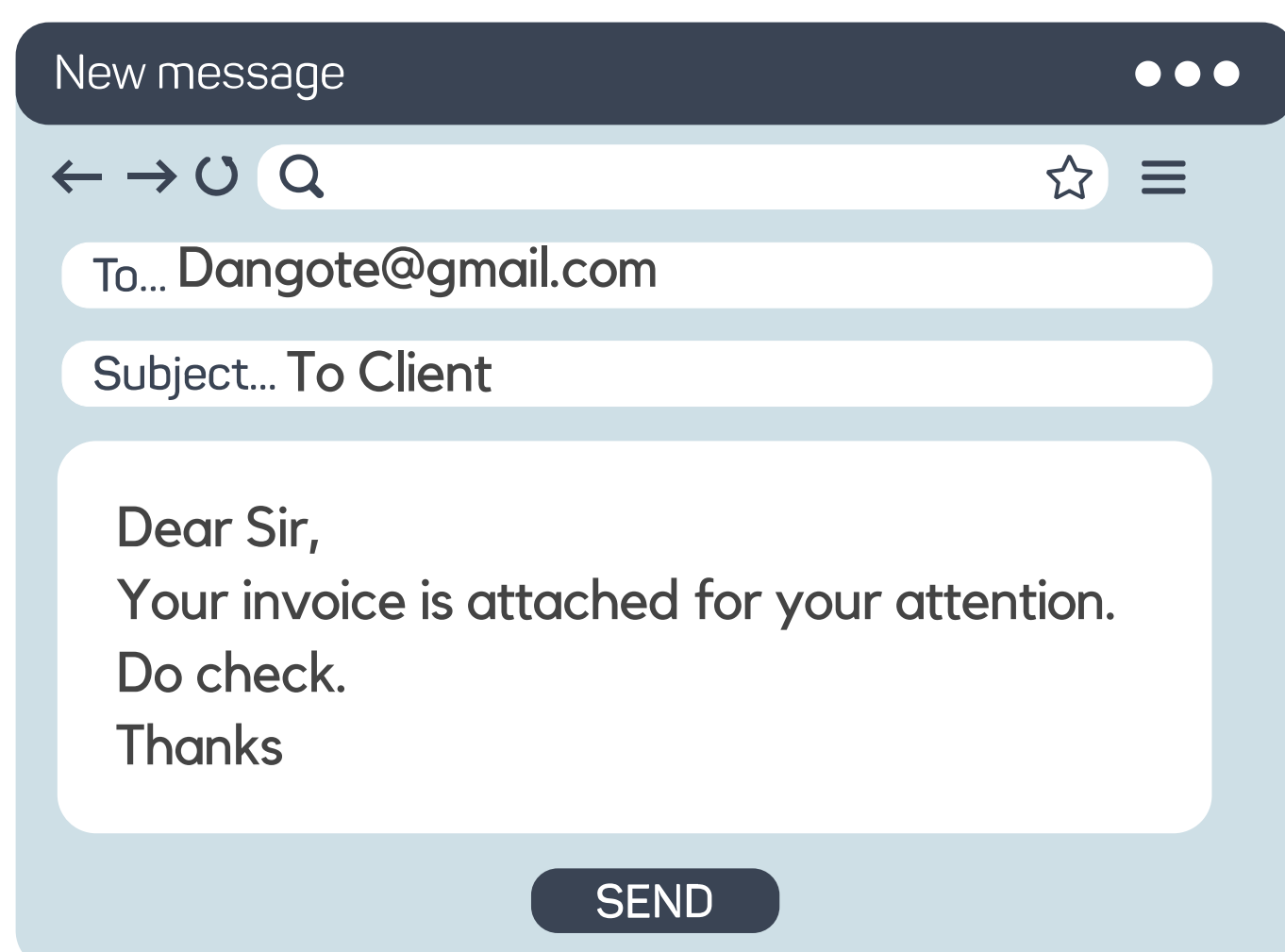


MAKE USE OF A RELEVANT SUBJECT LINE

Have you ever tried searching for an old email using all the obvious keywords only to find nothing? You're typing the client's name, the project title, or something related to the content you know was discussed, but nothing useful shows up. You can avoid this.

When your subject line doesn't reflect the actual topic of the email, it becomes difficult to track or retrieve later. For instance, if you're emailing about Client Mbappe, but your subject line says "Follow-up to the last meeting", the recipient won't find it when they search for anything Mbappe-related. Think of your subject line as a digital label. Make it specific, relevant, and tied to the content of your message.

A good subject line not only helps the recipient understand what your email is about at a glance but also helps everyone find it easily in the future. A simple switch from "Quick Question" to "Quick Question—Mbappe Client Feedback Q1" can save a lot of time.



NB: An example of an email with an unclear and irrelevant subject line



CONVEY URGENCY/CALL TO ACTION IN YOUR SUBJECT LINE

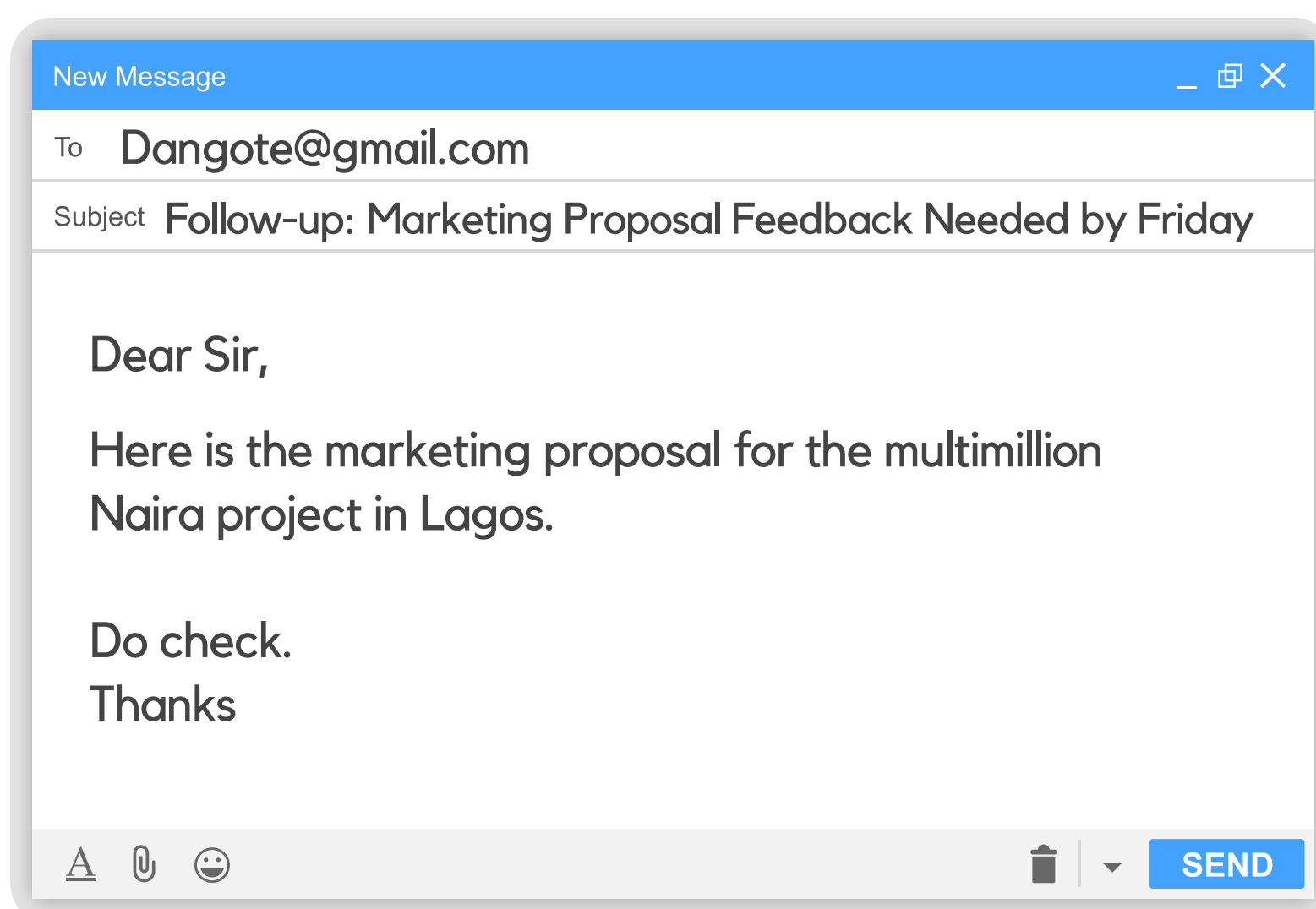
Sending an email with a vague subject line is like leaving a voicemail that says, "Call me back." It gives no sense of relatedness, specificity or what the message is about. Now, imagine receiving two emails with one titled "Update Needed" and another that says "Urgent: Approve Budget Proposal by 3 PM Today." Which one would you open first?

A relevant subject line should tell the recipient exactly what's needed and when. If you require action, make it clear. Instead of "Feedback on Report," try "Please Review & Send Feedback on Report by Thursday Noon." If time sensitivity is involved, indicate it, but avoid false urgency. Overusing words like "urgent" when it's not can reduce the impact or responsiveness to your email over time.

Other examples include:

Customer Issue: John Doe – Refund Request Update

Follow-up: Marketing Proposal Feedback Needed by Friday

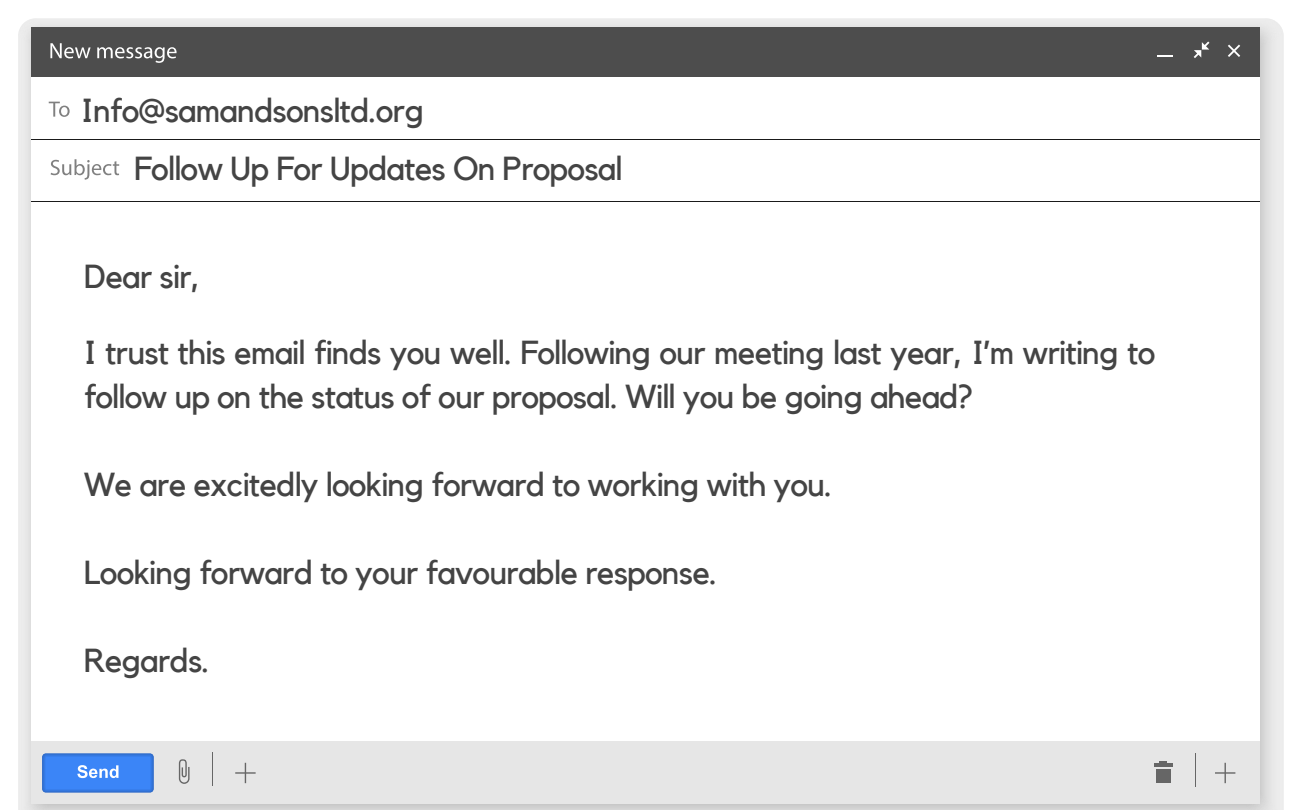
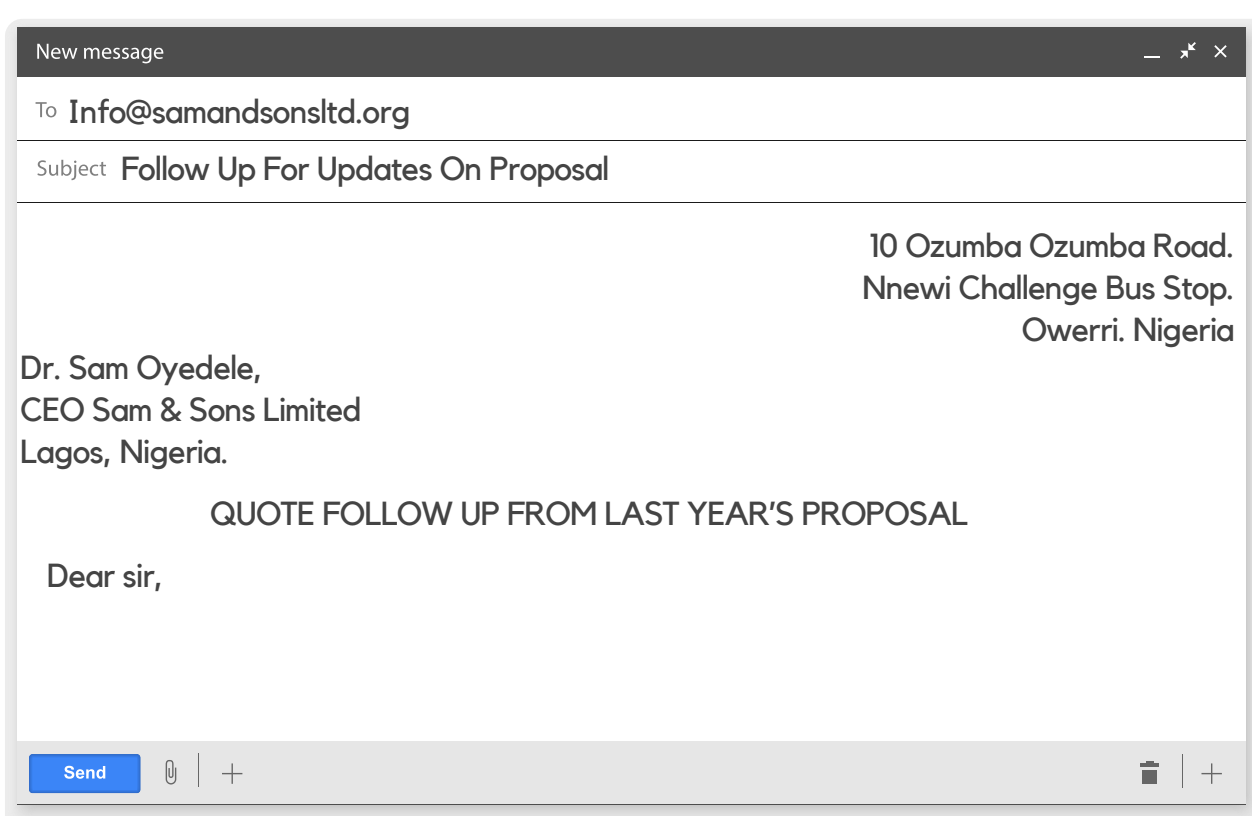




DITCH THE FORMAL LETTER FORMAT

On different occasions, I've had people send emails as though they were writing a formal letter. I mean everything, including their home address, my address, "Dear Sir/Madam," followed by multiple paragraphs of long, formal text. While I understood their intent, sending emails this way is unacceptable, and, honestly, exhausting to read.

Email is not a letter. Unlike traditional letters, emails are meant to be direct, concise, and structured for quick reading. You don't need to start with your address or the recipient's. A simple, professional greeting like "Hello [Name]," or "Dear [Name]," is enough. Instead of long-winded intros, get to the point quickly.

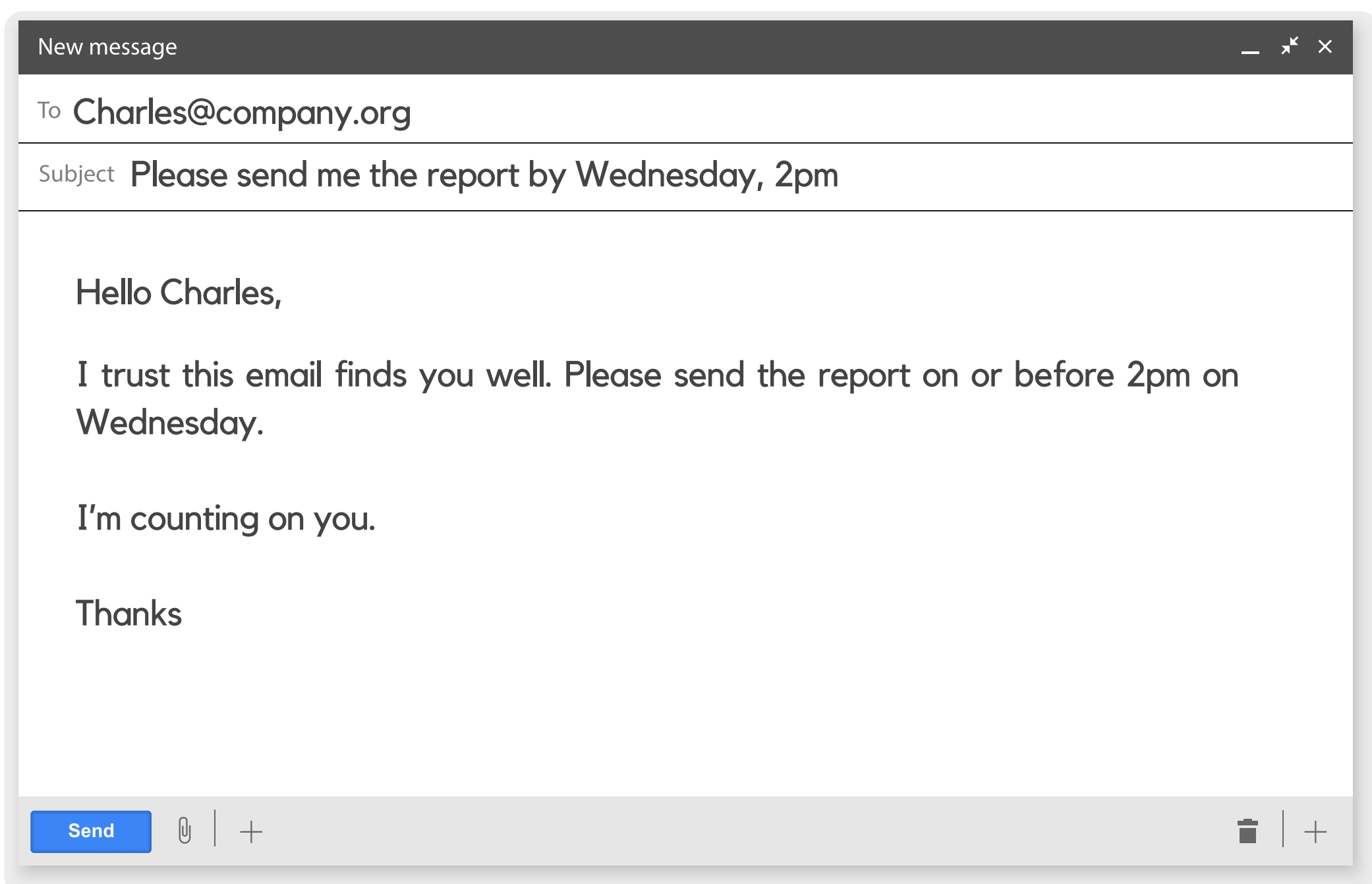




STATE CLEAR DEADLINES

When you're asking someone to do something over email, one of the kindest (and smartest) things you can do is tell them exactly when you need it done. Use phrases like “as soon as you can”, “when you get a chance”, or “soon” can easily be misunderstood or worse, ignored. Not because the other person doesn't want to help, but because they genuinely don't know how urgent your request is or where to slot it in their busy schedule.

If you're requesting feedback, data, a response, or a document, always include a clear and realistic deadline. Instead of saying, “Please send me the report”, say, “Please send me the report by Wednesday, 2pm, so I can include it in our team presentation.” This makes your request easy to prioritise, and shows respect for the other person's time. Deadlines drive action. Use them wisely.





KEEP IT PRECISE AND BRIEF

Writing an email is not the same as writing a novel. Don't attempt to be Shakespeare or a news reporter. The goal is not to impress with long sentences but to communicate your message clearly and quickly.

When an email is too long, there are high chances that the email will not be responded to. In a fast-paced work environment, people don't have time to sift through long paragraphs to find the key message.

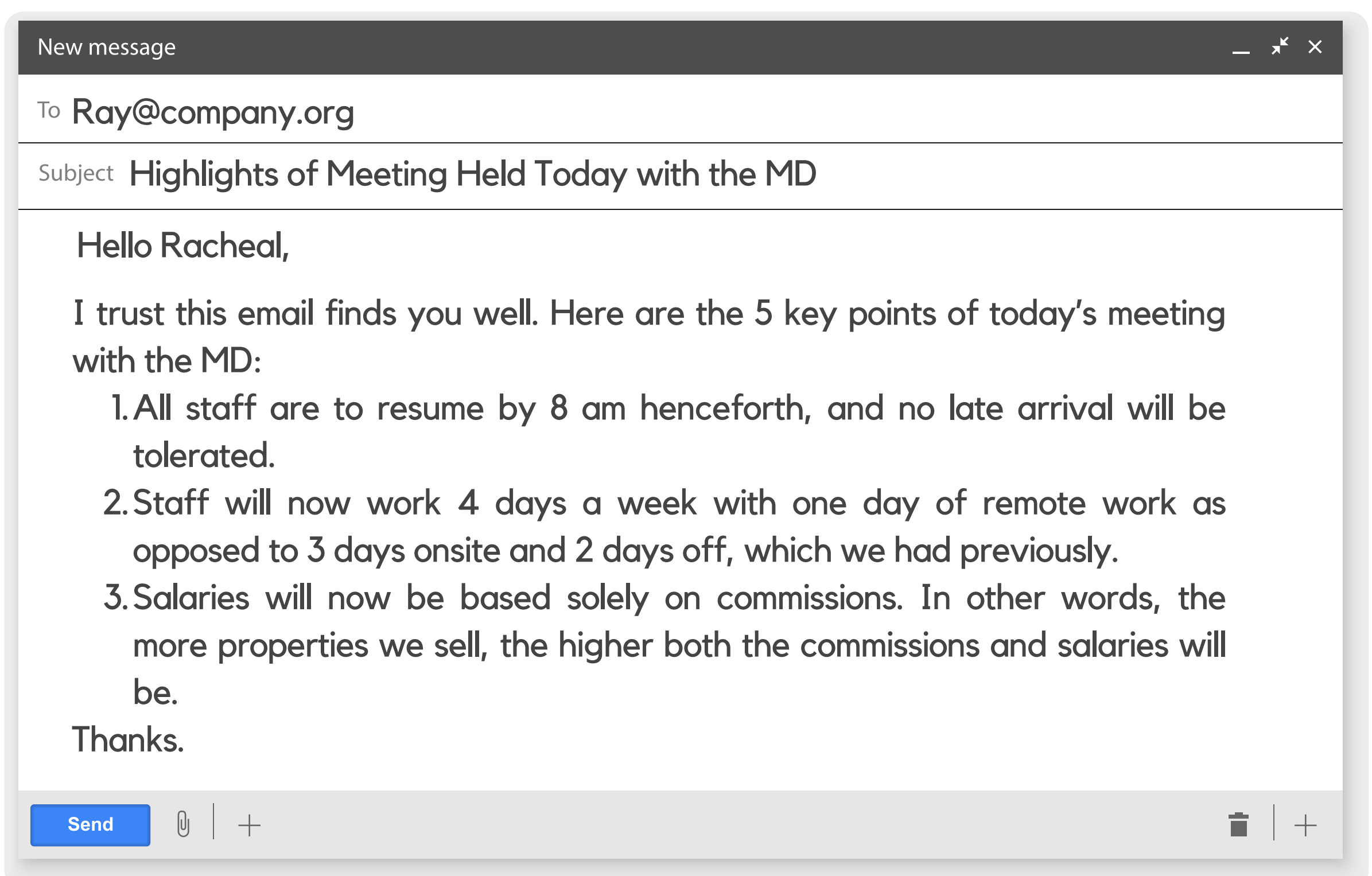
The best emails are short, direct, and easy to scan. Keep in mind: If your email takes more than a few seconds to grasp, you risk losing your reader's attention



WITH LONG EMAILS, CATEGORIZE AND USE BULLET POINTS FOR CLARITY

Writing is similar to building a storey building. Imagine constructing a seven-floor building without a clear plan; each floor jumbled together, making it difficult for people to find what they need. If your email contains several important points, updates, or instructions, organising them properly ensures clarity and easy navigation.

If your email were to contain seven important updates about a meeting, a project, or an incident, it's crucial to categorise the information so your recipient doesn't have to dig through paragraphs to find what they need.





YOUR EMAIL TONE

The way you write an email is just as important as what you write. A poorly worded message can make you sound rude, passive-aggressive, or even unprofessional without you even realizing it.

A simple phrase like “Send me the report” can come across as demanding, while “Hey, could you please send over the report when you get a chance? Thanks!” sounds much more professional and approachable. Your tone sets the mood of your email, and in a professional setting, you want to be seen as polite, clear, and respectful.

To get your tone right, always consider your recipient. If you're emailing a manager, keep it professional yet warm. If it's a colleague, a friendly but concise tone works best.

Avoid unnecessary formality, excessive exclamation marks, writing in capital letters or overly casual language that might make you seem careless.

Before hitting send, read your email aloud to yourself. If it sounds off, adjust it. A well-toned email ensures clarity, avoids misunderstandings, and helps you build strong professional relationships.

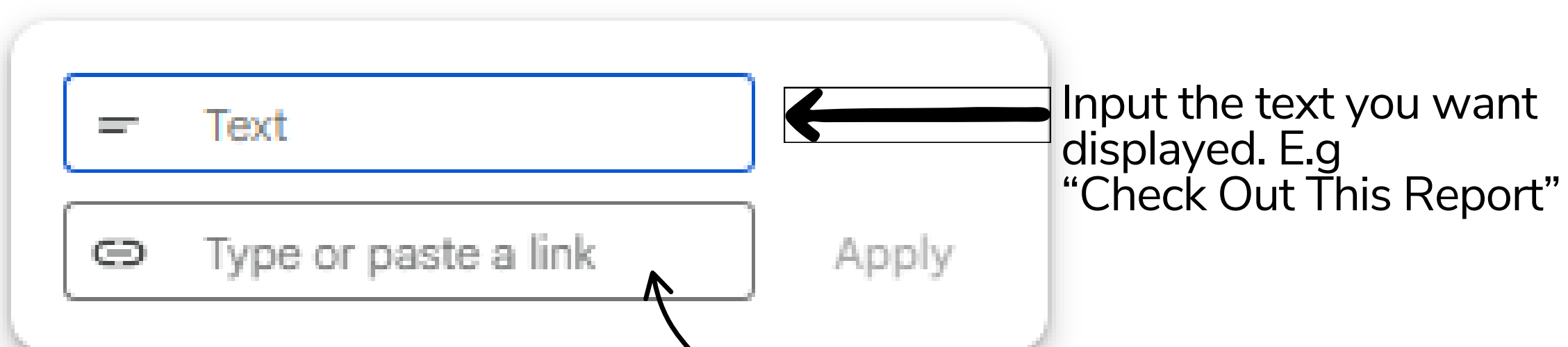
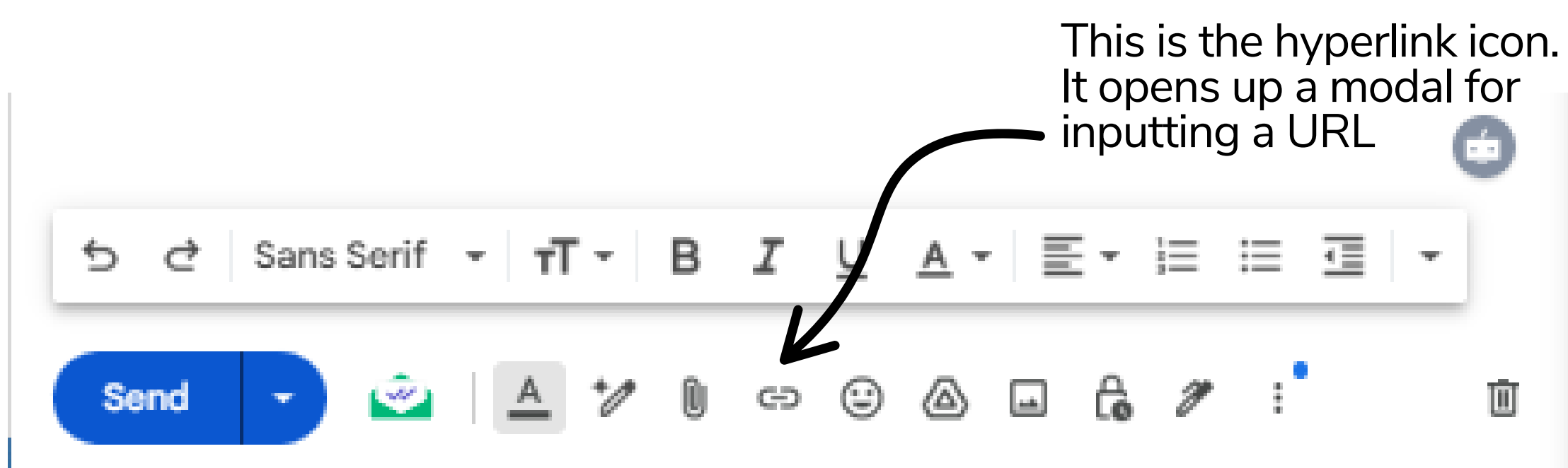


USE HYPERLINKS NOT LONG URLS

Nothing screams unprofessional like a long, messy URL pasted in the middle of a sentence. Imagine receiving an email that says, "[Check out this report: www.companysite.com/files/annual-report-2024-version-6-final-final-FINAL.pdf](http://www.companysite.com/files/annual-report-2024-version-6-final-final-FINAL.pdf)."

It looks unprofessional, disrupts readability, and forces the reader to copy and paste if the link breaks. Instead, clean things up by hyperlinking relevant text, such as "[Download this annual report](#)." This keeps your email structured, easy to read, and visually appealing.

Hyperlinks also make it clear what the recipient is clicking on. This small habit improves email clarity and makes you look more polished and professional.



Paste the URL and click apply

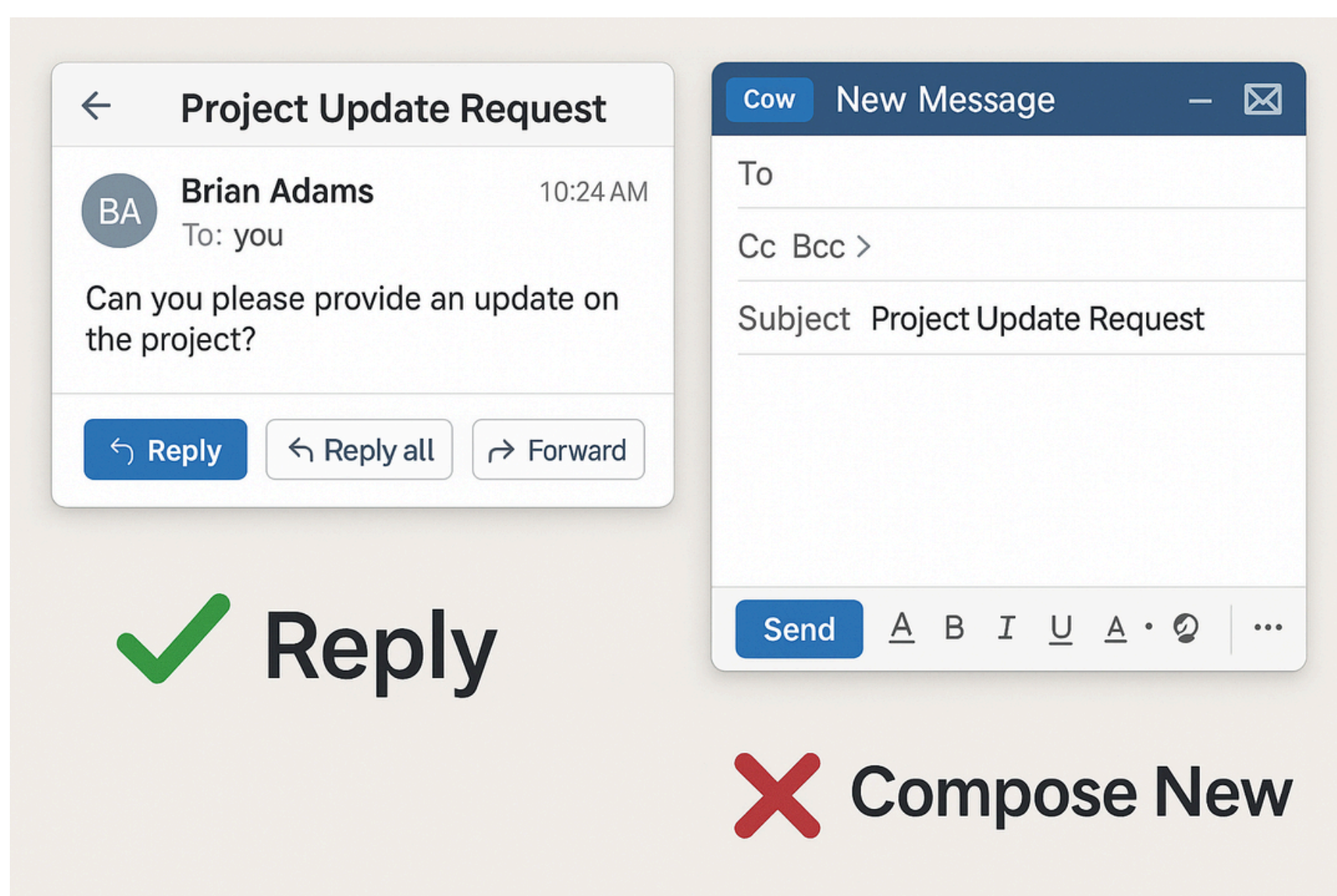


REPLY IN THE SAME THREAD

Starting a new email every time you have an update on the same topic is like resetting a conversation mid-discussion.

Imagine asking your manager about a project on Monday, then sending a separate follow-up on Wednesday, and another one on Friday. Not only does this scatter the conversation across multiple emails, but it also forces the recipient to dig through their inbox to piece things together. Instead, always reply within the same email thread to keep all relevant information in one place. This makes it easier for everyone to track progress, reference past messages, and avoid unnecessary confusion.

A well-maintained thread acts as a timeline of discussions, decisions, and action points. It helps not only to improve communication flow, but also shows that you value your colleagues' time by keeping things organised and efficient.





USE THE RIGHT REPLY OPTIONS

When responding to an email, you typically have three options: Reply, Reply All, and Forward. Reply sends your response only to the original sender, Reply All includes everyone in the thread, and Forward allows you to send the email to another email address outside the current recipients in the email thread.

Each of these serves a distinct purpose, and knowing when to use them correctly can make a big difference in how professional and efficient your email communication is.

Hitting “Reply All” unnecessarily is a common mistake that can clutter inboxes and irritate colleagues. If your response is only relevant to the sender, stick with “Reply” to keep things streamlined. On the other hand, “Reply All” is useful when providing updates to an entire team or ensuring everyone stays informed. Forward, on the other hand, is best used for sending the email to an entirely new person who wasn’t part of the original interaction. Choosing the right reply option ensures your emails are clear, respectful of others' time, and contribute to organised communication in the workplace.



UNDERSTAND WHEN TO CC/BCC AND WHEN TO ESCALATE

CC (Carbon Copy) and BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) are useful tools, but only when used correctly. CC is for keeping someone in the loop without requiring their direct response, while BCC is typically for mass emails where recipients don't need to see each other's addresses.

Overusing CC can flood inboxes with unnecessary emails, and misusing BCC can create distrust if recipients later realise they were included without their knowledge. Before adding someone, ask yourself: Does this person really need to see this email? If not, leave them out.

However, email isn't always the right tool for solving problems. If an issue is urgent, sensitive, or dragging on in an endless email thread, consider escalating it. Instead of CC'ing a manager as a passive way to get attention, address the issue directly by requesting a meeting or bringing it up in person. Email is for communication, not conflict resolution. Knowing when to move beyond it is a skill that sets professionals apart.



EXPLAIN WHY YOU ADDED OR REMOVED SOMEONE FROM THE THREAD

When adding someone to a thread, always clarify why they're included so they can quickly catch up and understand their role. A simple line at the top of your email like: "Adding Sarah here for visibility on the budget discussion," prevents confusion and saves time. Likewise, if you're removing someone, a quick note like, "Removing John to keep his inbox clear—he's no longer involved in this project," ensures transparency and avoids any misunderstandings.

Failing to provide this context can lead to unnecessary back-and-forth, or worse, key people missing out on important information. It also helps set expectations—if someone is added, they know they may need to take action, and if they're removed, they know they're off the hook. A few extra seconds to explain these changes makes your communication clearer, more professional, and much easier to follow.



KNOW WHEN TO START A NEW EMAIL THREAD FOR A DIFFERENT TOPIC

Email threads are meant to keep conversations organised, not to turn into endless chains of unrelated discussions. If you're introducing a completely new topic, such as shifting from a project update to a budget request, start a fresh email instead of tacking it onto an old thread. This makes it easier for recipients to find relevant information later without having to scroll through unrelated messages. A good rule of thumb: if the subject line no longer matches the conversation, it's time for a new thread.

Failing to start a new thread can lead to confusion, lost emails, and missed action points. Imagine trying to find details about an upcoming meeting but having to dig through a 20-email chain about last quarter's sales report. Keeping topics separate respects people's time and inbox space. When you're in doubt, start fresh. It ensures clarity and makes sure your email gets the attention it deserves.



PROOFREAD BEFORE HITTING SEND

A lot of email users make this mistake. Thankfully, you won't be making this mistake any longer. Hitting "send" without proofreading is like submitting a job application with typos in your CV and cover letter. It instantly affects how you're perceived.

A spelling mistake or a poorly structured sentence can make your email look rushed or unprofessional. Before you send, take a minute to read through your email. Check for typos, unclear wording, and missing attachments. If it's an important email, try reading it aloud or even stepping away for a few minutes so you can review it with fresh eyes.

Once an email is sent, you can't take it back (unless you're lucky enough to catch it with the "undo send" feature). A well-proofread email shows attention to detail and respect for the recipient's time. Don't let simple mistakes undermine your message. Proofreading is a small effort that makes a big difference.



NB:

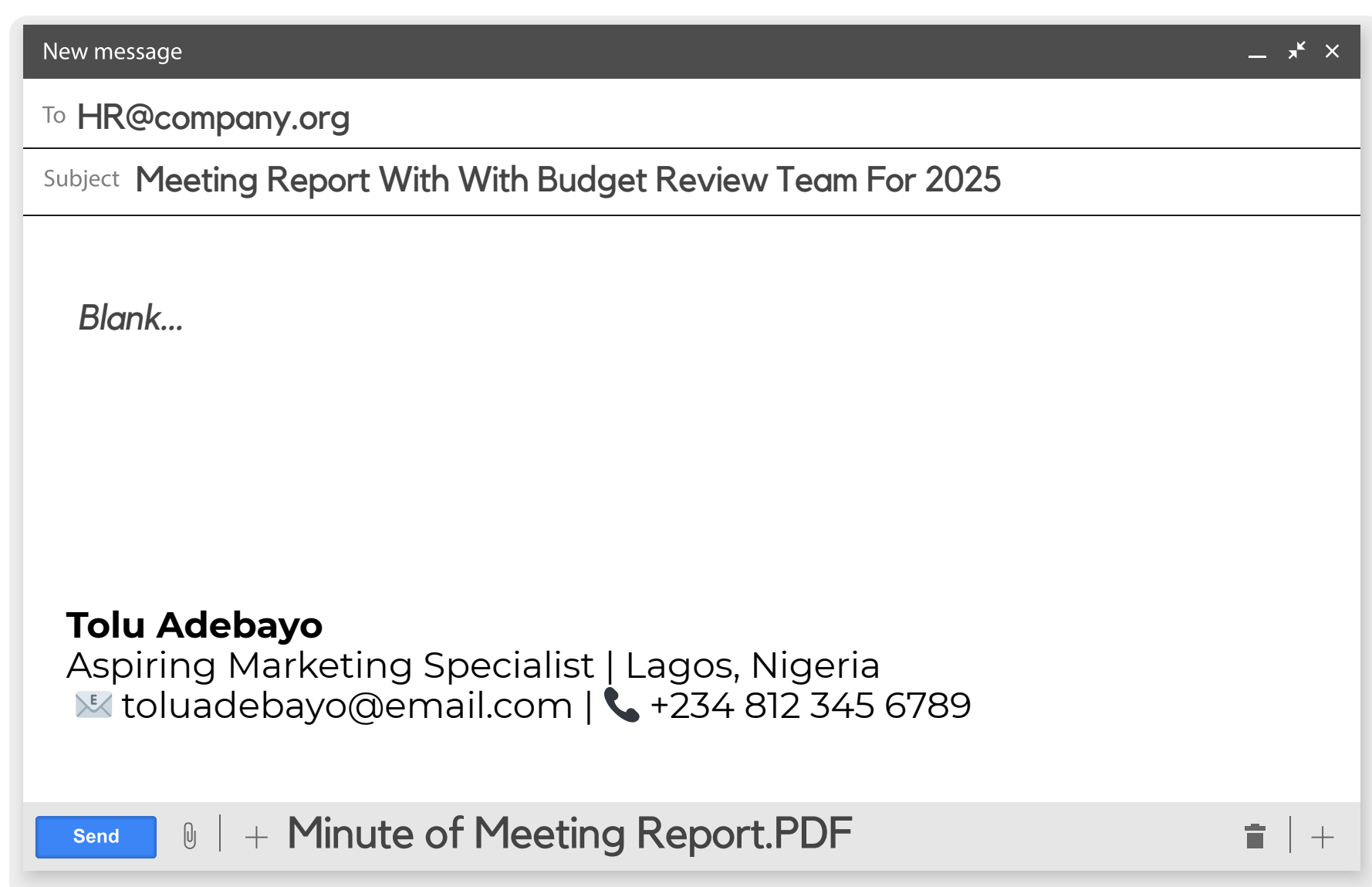
Here's an example of an email that was sent without being proofread for errors.



AVOID EMPTY BODY OF MAILS

Sending an email with an attachment but no message in the body is poor etiquette and unfortunately, it's still a common mistake. Even if you've just finished a phone call with the recipient or you think the attachment speaks for itself, never send a blank email. It leaves the reader guessing and can come off as careless or rushed.

Instead, always include a short message that adds context. It doesn't have to be long or complicated. Something as simple as, "Hi [Name], as discussed on our call, please find the attached document," goes a long way. It shows courtesy, professionalism, and clarity. These three qualities never go unnoticed. Always let your message say something, even if it's just to guide the reader.





FORWARDING EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Forwarding an email without adjusting the subject line can cause confusion, especially if the original subject isn't relevant to the new recipient.

Imagine applying for a job and forwarding an old email thread for your application to a new company with a subject like "Application for Product Manager at Sendo" whereas the new company is, say, Airtel. It looks careless and unprofessional. Always take a moment to update the subject line so it reflects the purpose of your email. If you're forwarding a report to your manager, for example, instead of leaving it as "FWD: Quarterly Sales Update," you could refine it to "Sales Report for Review – Q1 2025."

Small details like this make a big difference in how your emails are received.



REATTACH YOUR FILES

If you're sending a reminder about a previous email that included an attachment, don't assume the recipient will go searching for the original message. Make it easy for them by reattaching the file.

People receive dozens, sometimes hundreds, of emails daily, and digging through old threads to find a missing document is an unnecessary hassle. Instead of saying "Please refer to my previous email for the document," simply reattach it so they have everything they need at a glance.

This small habit shows professionalism and consideration for the recipient's time. It also reduces the chances of miscommunication or delays due to missing files.



ATTACH FIRST. WRITE LATER

We've all at different times sent an email only to realise seconds later that we forgot to attach the file. It's frustrating, unprofessional, and can lead to unnecessary back-and-forth emails. A simple trick to avoid this is to attach your files before you start writing. This way, you won't get carried away crafting the perfect message and hit send without including the necessary documents.

Imagine you're applying for your dream job. You've spent hours perfecting your CV and cover letter, and you write a great email to the hiring manager, but in your excitement, you hit send without attaching your documents.

Now, instead of making a strong first impression, you have to send an awkward follow-up email: "Apologies, I forgot to attach my CV. Please find it attached now." To avoid this, make it a habit to attach first and write later. It's a simple step that saves you embarrassment and ensures your email is complete before it leaves your inbox.

Contract Draft Review - Hem & Haw Holdings

Customer Care Nigeria

Contract Draft Review - Hem & Haw Holdings

Compose your email

EMAIL LIKE A PRO (2).pdf (1,380K) x

↶ ↷ Sans Serif ▾ ↕ ▴ ▾ B I U A ▾ ▮ ▮ ▮ ▮ ▮ ▾

Send ▾





ACKNOWLEDGE WHEN NEEDED

If you've ever sent an important message and waited anxiously for a response, you know how frustrating silence can be. Now, imagine being on the other side; your manager or recruiter sends you an email with a task or an update, and you don't respond. They're left wondering if you received it, if you're working on it, or if they need to follow up. That's why acknowledging emails is a small but powerful habit that keeps communication smooth and professional. A simple "Received, I'll review and get back to you" or "Got it, thanks!" can make all the difference.

For job seekers, this is especially important. If a recruiter or HR team emails you about an interview schedule or required documents, replying with a quick acknowledgement rather than leaving them in the dark shows professionalism and enthusiasm.

In workplace settings, many platforms like Slack, Telegram and WhatsApp Groups now allow reaction emojis (like a thumbs-up 👍 or checkmark ✅), which can be a great way to confirm receipt without flooding inboxes. The key is to avoid leaving people guessing if you received the message or what your response about the subject matter is. A short acknowledgement keeps things moving and makes you look reliable and responsive.



ACKNOWLEDGE THE PREVIOUS WRITER

Imagine your manager sends an email introducing you to a client.

For example, “Hi Chika, meet Bolu, who will support you on this.” Then Bolu replies immediately, saying “Hi Chika, I’ll take it from here,” without even mentioning your manager. It feels a bit off, right?

When someone loops you into an email conversation or makes an introduction, it's respectful to acknowledge them before continuing the thread. It could be as simple as “Thanks for the introduction, Mr Akin” or “Appreciate the loop-in, Tola.” It shows courtesy, awareness, and professionalism; all subtle, powerful signals that you’re someone people enjoy working with.



RENAME YOUR ATTACHMENTS

Attachments are a common feature of the emails we send. If for instance, while applying for a job you attach your CV with the name "Doc1.pdf", there is a high probability that this would be lost or ignored after being downloaded as it is not distinct.

Always rename your attachments before sending them, ensuring they are clear, professional, and relevant. Instead of "IMG001.jpg" or "New Doc (3).pdf", use names like "John_Doe_CV.pdf" or "Q1_Marketing_Report.xlsx".

In the workplace, renaming files properly prevents confusion when sharing reports, proposals, or presentations with colleagues and managers. If someone has to guess what your attachment is about, you're already making things harder than they should be. A clear filename makes documents easy to find, reference, and store, which can be the difference between a smooth workflow and unnecessary frustration.



WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE OF THE RECIPIENT'S FIRST OR LAST NAME, USE BOTH NAMES

Addressing someone incorrectly in an email can create an awkward first impression, especially when you're communicating with recruiters, managers, or clients.

If you're unsure whether to use "Dear Mr Adams" or "Dear Jonathan", the safest approach is to use both names: "Dear Jonathan Adams". This prevents any mix-up and ensures your email remains professional and respectful.

This is especially crucial for C-level executives. Imagine emailing a top executive in your organisation or another; if you guess incorrectly, it may come off as careless. However, using their full name eliminates doubt and shows attention to detail.

When in doubt, check their email signature or LinkedIn profile for confirmation. A little effort in addressing people correctly goes a long way in building professional relationships.



INCLUDE PHONETIC PRONUNCIATIONS OF YOUR NAME IN THE EMAIL SIGNATURE

If your name is often mispronounced, you're not alone. Many professionals, especially those with unique or culturally diverse names, experience this daily. Instead of constantly correcting people, help them get it right from the start by including a phonetic pronunciation in your email signature.

For example, my name is Sefunmi, to ensure everyone gets it and the pronunciation (in case of in-person conversations later on), I can write it in my email signature as Sefunmi (pronounced as Shay-Foon-Me). This small addition removes uncertainty and encourages people to address you correctly.

Sefunmi Fadahunsi (pronounced as Shay-Foon-Me).

Chief Executive Officer | Lagos, Nigeria

 sefunmifadahunsi@gmail.com |  +234 8001234567

For new professionals, this is a subtle yet powerful way to establish your identity confidently. It also helps in making interactions smoother and more respectful between people.

If your name often gets mispronounced during interviews, meetings, or email exchanges, this simple tweak to your signature can make a world of difference in how people remember and communicate with you.



ALWAYS INCLUDE YOUR EMAIL SIGNATURE

Your email signature is more like a digital business card. It tells the recipient who you are and how to reach you. Every email you send should include your full name, role, company (if applicable), and phone number. This makes it easy for recruiters, colleagues, and clients to contact you without digging through old emails or asking for details you could have provided upfront.

For job seekers, an email signature adds a touch of professionalism. Instead of signing off with just "Best regards, Tolu", include:

Tolu Adebayo

Aspiring Marketing Specialist | Lagos, Nigeria

✉ toluadebayo@email.com | ☎ +234 812 345 6789

This not only looks polished but also makes you more memorable. Your success in corporate life depends on your communicating professionally. So, set up your email signature once and let it work for you every time you hit send.

Congratulations

If you've made it this far, congratulations!

You've just equipped yourself with 25 powerful email etiquette tips that will set you apart professionally. The truth is, many people underestimate the impact of email communication in the workplace. But as you've seen throughout this book, emails are more than just words on a screen; they shape first impressions, build credibility, and keep professional relationships running smoothly.

Think of these tips as a toolkit. You don't have to master everything overnight, but they'll soon become second nature with consistent practice. You'll always find these tips valuable while applying for a job, sending reports to your boss, or just following up on a request. Your emails should always reflect clarity, confidence, and professionalism.

I can say from experience that good email habits don't just make you look competent; they make life easier for everyone you communicate with. So, as you step into the workplace or continue to grow in your career, be intentional about the emails you send. Keep them clear, keep them concise, and most importantly, keep them professional.

Wishing you success in your career and, of course, an inbox filled with successful projects and milestones enhanced by positive and productive email communication and collaboration.

Tabitha - Your Corporate Insider

I want to hear your thoughts about this book, the stories of how it has changed a lot about your corporate life - please send your testimonials to: tabitha@blustrat.org



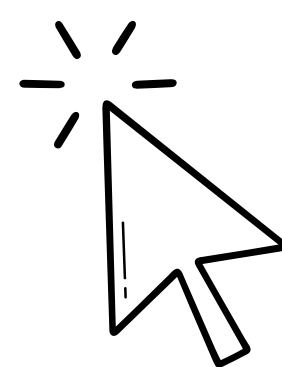
SEFUNMI FADAHUNSI, PMP
A.k.a Tabitha | CorporateInsider
Management Consultant
Program Management Leader
EdTech Advocate

on the following platforms



Medium

tap any of the icons above



In today's workplace, email communication isn't just about sending messages; it's about workplace collaboration, moving work forward, building trust, and showing up as a competent professional.

Especially for early-career professionals, communication in the workplace is largely based on your email communication. When done right, email becomes a tool for clarity, alignment, and action. When done poorly, it leads to confusion, delays, and missed opportunities.

This playbook is more than a guide to writing better emails; it's a practical toolkit for communicating with intention and leading with clarity. With 25 actionable, illustrative real-world tips, "The Workplace Playbook" equips you with habits that make communication smoother, collaboration stronger, and your presence more impactful.



Sefunmi Fadahunsi, also known as Tabitha | Corporate Insider, is a Management Consultant, Certified Project Manager, CSR Professional, and EdTech Expert with extensive multi-industry experience across the EMEA region. She has spent over 13 years shaping strategy and driving impact at global giants such as Microsoft and Oracle.

With a deep passion for developing top-tier talent, she mentors professionals to navigate, thrive, and lead in their careers. Her unique vantage point as a corporate insider fuels her mission to share practical, insider knowledge—one of which is captured in Email Like a Pro.

Sefunmi is committed to shaping industry-ready professionals who create real-world solutions and drive global impact—regardless of their background.