

**E-MAIL**

**PROS & CONS**

**“WHAT’S GOOD ABOUT IT AND  
NOT SO GOOD!”**


# ADVANTAGES - 1

## Asynchronous

- Information can be exchanged without participants having to interact at the same time
  - Eliminates the need to communicate in “real time.”
  - Speeds up the flow of information by overcoming two drawbacks of the telephone:
    - Busy signal
    - Telephone tag

# ADVANTAGES - 2

## Speed

- Send messages/entire documents in seconds across time zones (Global Enterprise)
  - Respond to messages in seconds
  - Communicate with people working at great distances from each other
  - Telecommute (more flexibility in work schedules)
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# ADVANTAGES - 3

## Variability – Increased efficiency

- Communicate in a multiple of forms
  - From one-one-one personal communication to mass communication
  - You can distribute a document to any number of people instantaneously with the click of a mouse (list-serves)
    - No longer necessary to print and photocopy a document(s) and then distribute, by postal mail or other, to individuals on a mailing list

# ADVANTAGES - 4

## More democratic

- Some people maintain that E-mail is a more democratic way of holding a discussion than the face-to-face meeting
  - E-mail eliminates the visual trappings of social status and position that are apparent to everyone in a face-to-face meeting,
  - E-mail allows people at various levels in an organization (hierarchy) to participate as equals in a discussion.

# ADVANTAGES – 5

## Psychological

- Nurtures a sense of connectedness and commitment in people who see that they are actively involved in a discussion, whether with family members, friends, strangers who share certain interests, or coworkers.

# DISADVANTAGES - 1

## Many forms, many audiences

- A variety of forms translates into a variety of audiences, including:
  - Nonnative speakers of English
    - Nonnative speakers of English may or may not understand American sayings or expressions or references to American culture (idioms)



# DISADVANTAGES - 2

## Lack of Consensus

- E-mail discussions may be more democratic than face-to-face meetings, but equality of communication can increase the number of suggested solutions to a problem
  - Might make it more challenging to reach a solution or consensus?
    - If disagreements arise, no one in charge to referee
    - Debate can degenerate into a verbal brawl.



# DISADVANTAGES - 3

## Social cues absent

- Participants in an E-mail can be neither seen nor heard so social cues are absent, making it easy for people to make ill-advised or inappropriate remarks.
- **Misinterpretation:**
  - People are not sitting around a table –cannot see how people are dressed (conservative/liberal),
  - Cannot see facial expressions (lack of verbal feedback)
  - Cannot hear the tone of voice

# DISADVANTAGES - 4

## Hard to size-up social situation

- It is easy to say things that can have unwanted consequences
- Impulsive or hasty replies can be unduly harsh, flippant, or defensive, and often provoke other impulsive responses
- The sending of an irate or rude message has been common enough to have been given its own name: *flaming*

# DISADVANTAGES - 5

## Misunderstandings

- Indications of interest or agreement, positive remarks, or even compliments that are easily interpreted in face-to-face meetings can be, and often are, construed (read/understood) as sarcasms when communicated in E-mail!

# DISADVANTAGES - 6

## Information over-load!

- Irrelevant (not important) or redundant (not needed)
- Communicants copy people that do not need to be involved in the discussion (e-mail blast!)
- People become overburdened with messages, slowing the flow of productive information.

# **NO EASY SOLUTION**

**Restraining yourself from making an impulsive response is not always possible in a busy workday!**

- As an insurance policy against a potential disaster, a good practice is to consider whether you would utter your remarks in a face-to-face meeting, and if not, why not?

**You must always do your best to determine who your audience is (analyze your audience) and anticipate how *YOUR* remarks may be taken.**

**E-MAIL**

**INFORMAL, CONVERSATIONAL  
BEWARE!**

# E-MAIL:

## Informal, Conversational

- Because certain forms of E-mail are characterized by a rapid give and take that resembles conversation, e-mails tend to be more informal in tone than conventional print writing
- Conversational E-mailers have developed a variety of practices to sustain an informal tone while at the same time saving keystrokes.

## E-MAIL

### Use of contractions:

- “don’t” instead of “do not”

### Abbreviated expressions:

- “don’t know” for “I don’t know”

### Use of “eye dialect” spellings:

- “gonna” for “going to,”  
“gotta,” for “have got to”

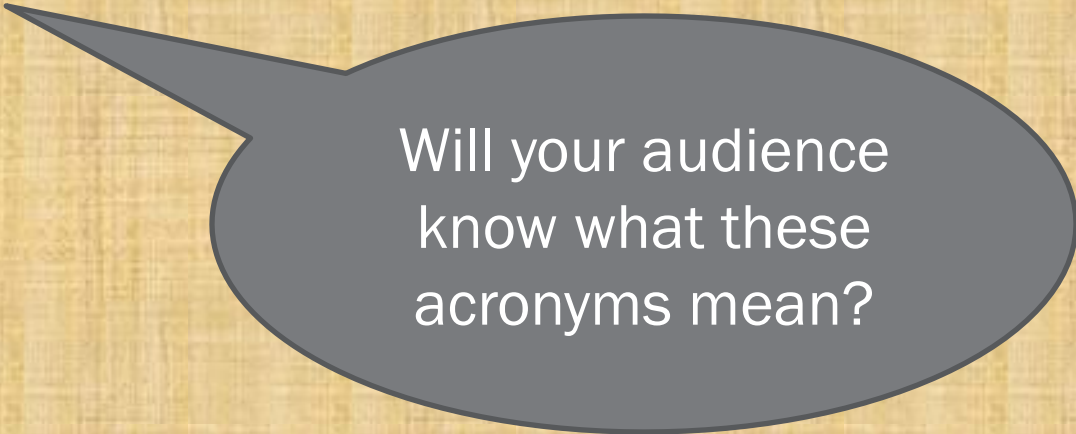




# E-MAIL

## Use of Acronyms

- People use acronyms to stand for commonly used expressions or to indicate attitudes and emotional responses. These acronyms are usually capitalized.
  - BBL (Be Back Later)
  - BFN (Bye For Now)
  - BRB (Be Right Back)
  - IMO (In My Opinion)



Will your audience know what these acronyms mean?

# E-MAIL

## Grammar

- E-mail/avoid more exclamations than print (!!!!)
- Trailing dots are favorites too, indicating incompleteness of thought...Don't use them!
- To give a message special emphasis an E-mailer may write entirely in capital letters, a device E-mailers refer to as *Screaming!!*
  - ***Never Use All Caps!!!!***

*Again, know your audience and when to use proper grammar!*

# E-MAIL

## Emoticons

- Perhaps the most famous of all visual conventions are the “emoticons” or “smileys” that people use to summarize emotions:
  - List of Emoticons

Will the person(s)  
you are e-mailing  
appreciate a 😊

# E-MAIL

## Reader Expectations

- The general tendency of E-mailers to be informal is the tendency of readers to be more forgiving than readers of printed material.
- Where a misspelling in a printed letter leaves many readers concluding that the writer is a slob or a dunce, the same misspelling in an E-mail message hardly makes a difference to the readers.
- ***E-mail is informal, therefore, it is not appropriate for an important business communication or a serious personal letter.***

# E-MAIL

## Beware

- On the positive side, e-mail is a relatively simple, user-friendly, and inexpensive tool; allows employees to communicate instantaneously with each other and outsiders.
- Many treat e-mail like a telephone conversation that no one will remember, rather than a business letter that may be printed or forwarded to others.
  - ***Electronic information is potentially admissible before courts of law!***



# E-MAIL

## Last word

- E-mail is a medium used for a whole spectrum of rhetorical or not literal situations.
- It is easy to get entranced by the novelty and the speed of electronic communication, to think of it more as a playground than as a city full of varied neighborhoods.
- As a writer/communicator, you must always keep your wits about you and be street smart!

**Everything has its limits: E-mail is no exception**