Communication with Professors and Potential Employers

Five Email Communication Principles

1. Do not place (or appear to place) demands on the audience
   - Acknowledge imposition
   - Use phrasing that softens your requests
   - Acknowledge that your audience can say “no”

2. Make it as easy as possible for your audience to respond
   - Provide a plan of action when appropriate
   - Show that you’ve exhausted your other resources
   - Ask specific questions that are easy to respond to

3. Show gratitude or apologize when appropriate
   - Use explicit and multiple thank you’s
   - Acknowledge any imposition
   - Apologize when appropriate

4. Put important information early—where your audience is sure to see it
   - Write short but informative subject lines
   - Put the “ask” early or where your reader is sure to see it
   - Use white space effectively

5. Err on the side of formality
   - Use appropriate titles, greetings, and closing
   - Proofread very closely
   - Pay attention to the overall tone

Example Email Using the Five Email Communication Principles

Subject: Meeting to discuss Friday’s class material

Dear Professor Jones,

This is Jamie Smith from your Statistics class. I’m very sorry that I had to miss class last Friday; I had a family emergency and had to leave town. I know you are very busy, but I was hoping you could meet with me for 15 minutes at a time that is convenient for you to go over X concept.

I looked at the Blackboard materials and got notes from a classmate, however I’m still having trouble understanding X, and, unfortunately, I cannot attend your scheduled office hours.

I’m available M/W from 9a – 12p and Tuesday all afternoon. If you’re unable to meet during those times, perhaps you could suggest a time that works for you. Again, I apologize I had to miss class.

Thank you,
Jaime
Email Brainstorming Activity 1

What is the purpose of my email?_______________________________________________

I need to request/I want to talk about:

What other resources are available to me?

Is email the best medium of communication?

Who is my Audience (the person receiving my email)?_____________________________

What do I know about this person?

What does s/he care about?

**Familiarity:** How well do I well do you know your audience? Would s/he would recognize me by name?

**Imposition:** How imposing is my request? What am I asking my audience to do for me?

**Draft your Own Email**

[Subject]

[Greeting]

[Body]

[Closing]

**Some Good Resources**
Email Greeting: [http://www.businesswritingblog.com/business_writing/2006/01/greetings_and_s.html](http://www.businesswritingblog.com/business_writing/2006/01/greetings_and_s.html)