# **How-To: Write an Email | QC Writing Center**

**Why bother with “professional” emails?**An email with timing, structure, and tone well-suited to your audience (such as a professor or advisor) better conveys your message and shows respect. This helps **yield a quick, clear response** for your question, request, or concern.

**Tips for Timing**It’s an appropriate time to email when your question, request, or concern:

* cannot be addressed in-person within your desired timeframe
* would benefit from a written response or paper trail (for example, some people struggle with verbal processing and benefit from written clarification)
* needs to address multiple people (in this case, the “CC” function might come in handy!)

**Tips for Structure**Emails are organized into a ***greeting***, ***body***, and ***closing*** section. It’s generally best to keep each section brief.

* The **g*reeting*** addresses the recipient and sets the tone → If you skip this step, your professor or advisor won’t know whether your message was meant for their inbox or somebody else’s.
* The ***body*** identifies you as the sender and articulates the purpose for the email → If you’re emailing in advance of a meeting, for example, the body of your email should provide that context.
* The ***closing*** includes a send-off and necessary contact info → It’s a good idea to include your EMPLID when corresponding within CUNY.

Before clicking “send,” don’t forget to include a ***subject line***, which should convey the “gist” of your message   
in just a few words.

**Tips for Tone**While your tone (or the attitude evoked through your writing) won’t be as casual as in a text message, remember that you’re still in conversation with a real person. Remain to-the-point but polite, even if you’re confused or upset.

* Use complete and punctuated sentences
* Avoid reductions like “wanna” or “gotta”
* Abbreviations (ex. ECON102), acronyms (CUNY), and Caps Lock are acceptable when referring to classes  
  or organizations

**EXAMPLE EMAIL**

To give you a better idea of how the elements of timing, structure, and tone come together, check out this mock email.

*Scenario: John Ramos, a student in Professor Smith’s economics class, emails at 6PM requesting clarification*

*on a group assignment. The professor is out sick for the week, so John cannot ask this question in class.*

