

Home and School Associations and E-mail – Guidelines

E-mail has become the communication tool of choice for many individuals and Home and School Associations. As this form of communication is public, easily distributed and easily copied it is inherently useful and perilous. OFHSA has produced this tip sheet to provide you with general guidelines to make your use of e-mail constructive, effective and polite. Please refer to OFHSA's tip sheet on Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation, ***H&S and the CASL***. E-mails can be CEM's (Commercial Electronic Messages)

Use discretion about when to use e-mail

- ❖ If you wish the conversation to be private have a face-to-face or use the telephone.
- ❖ To avoid misunderstandings of content or tone: face-to-face or telephone.
- ❖ Do not use e-mail to deliberate or think aloud. It is difficult to moderate or control the direction of discussions held via e-mail. Have a meeting.

The subject line and body of the e-mail

- ❖ Clear subject lines allow the reader to know what to expect and help with later searches.
- ❖ Subject lines should distinguish one e-mail from another.
- ❖ Keep to one subject per e-mail. This helps to keep the chain of messages easier to manage and search.
- ❖ Make your message concise. If it is too long for an e-mail, consider another form of communication.
- ❖ Before sending, check for clarity: does the message say what you wanted it to? Is the humour too risky or easily misinterpreted?
- ❖ Check spelling and grammar. Do not rely on spell check.
- ❖ Use a privacy disclaimer
- ❖ Include your contact information
- ❖ Include an unsubscribe mechanism if part of a distribution list

Use of cc and bcc

- ❖ Copy only those people who really need to be copied on a message. Don't clog the Inbox of others thinking 'they can delete it if they don't want it'.
- ❖ When communicating with a large group (all association members) use the bcc line to keep their e-mail addresses private.
- ❖ When forwarding an e-mail protect the names and addresses of previous recipients by cutting them from the message. Only the text of the message should be forwarded.

Some things to consider

- ❖ Do not forward messages that are inflammatory, meant to be private, or will provoke a harmful response.
- ❖ Do not send an e-mail when you are feeling upset or angry. Step away from the computer...go for a walk...have a cup of tea. Read and re-read the e-mail. Consider the consequences of sending: an e-mail is a permanent recording.



Reference: Michaluk, D., (2013). Healthy Email Use for Corporations: Ten Tips. The Ontario Electrical Contractor, Spring 2013. Retrieved from www.ecao.org/pub_news.asp