

EFFECTIVE EMAIL ELEMENTS

AUDIENCE

- Is this addressed to the people who need to know this information?
- Why do they need this information? What will they do with it?
- Will this information be welcome or unwelcome to this audience? Why?
- Will this information be expected or unexpected to this audience? Why?
- Is there anyone else who need to be in the loop? Why?
- How do you expect your reader(s) to feel? React? Do? Why?

tone

- What is the overall tone of this email? How do you know?
- Is the tone appropriate? Why?
- Is the tone professional? How so?
- Is the tone appropriately informal or formal? How so?
- Is the tone polite or angry? How so?
- Have you written in the active voice?
- Does it contain “I” statements?
- Does it contain any qualifying conjunctions (such as “but” or “however”)? How might you eliminate these?
- Does it contain any absolutes (such as “always” or “never”) How might you eliminate these?
- Would this message be better received over the phone or in person?

TIMING

- By when do you need your reader(s) to read this email? Why?
- What are the ramifications if this message is not read by then?
- What else might be your reader(s) be doing right now? How does that affect the timing?
- Is this the time when your reader will be most receptive to your message? How do you know?
- Might this message be better received/more promptly received over the phone or in person?

TENSION

- What is the nature of your personal relationship/history with your reader? Your professional relationship/history?
- How might this impact or color how your reader perceives this message?
- In light of your relationship, might this message be better received over the phone or in person?

MAIN MESSAGE

- Does the subject line preview the content of the message?
- Does the main point of your message appear in the first paragraph? On the first screen?
- Do you have an appropriate opening that builds or maintains rapport?
- If this is a response, did you restate the problem as indicated by the reader?
- Did you quote or paraphrase the issue as indicated by the reader to signify your understanding?
- What is your understanding of how the reader would like the issue resolved? Do you have all the information needed to do this?
- What is the reader feeling? How can you acknowledge how the reader is feeling in your email?
- What is your role in the issue indicated? Have you acknowledged your responsibility?
- What are your next steps? Have you indicated them?
- Do you have an appropriate closing that builds or maintains rapport?

FORMAT

- Are your paragraphs short and concise?
- Is white space used to group ideas?
- Can information be presented in vertical lists, using bullets or numbers?
- Does this email require more than one page scroll to read?

FINAL CHECK

- How would you feel if your supervisor read this? If the reader's supervisor read this? If this were on the front page of the New York Times?