Staying Safe Online
Montpelier Senior Center

Week #5
Using Email Safely & Well

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https://tinyurl.com/3b6p3h8s

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Topics

- **Delivery Not Guaranteed**
- **First E-impressions**
- **Discretion in Email Criticism**
- **HTML-formatted Email Doesn't Work Reliably**
- **To/Cc + Reply All = Trouble**
- **Mailstorms**
- **Bcc Prevents Email Nuisances**
- **Burying Your Email Message**
- **Misleading Subject Fields**
- **Forwarding Confidential Info**
- **Email Carrying Malware**
- **Check Every Link Before Clicki[ng]**
- **The Keeper Of The Lists**

This lecture includes material that applies to work emails as well as info about personal emails.

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DELIVERY NOT GUARANTEED (1)

- ➢ **IETF* definition of email** does not include guaranteed *delivery***
- ➢ **DEFINITELY does not guarantee *reading!***
- ➢ **Do NOT assume delivery or reading**
- ➢ **Use *Request a Delivery/Read Receipt* when necessary**
- ➢ **CALL YOUR CORRESPONDENT for urgent messages**

* Internet Engineering Task Force < https://tools.ietf.org/ >

**** White, J. (1973). "A Proposed Mail Protocol." IETF RFC 524. < https://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc524 >**

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DELIVERY NOT GUARANTEED (2)

- ➢ **OUTLOOK and other mail programs can help sender be informed of delivery and reading**
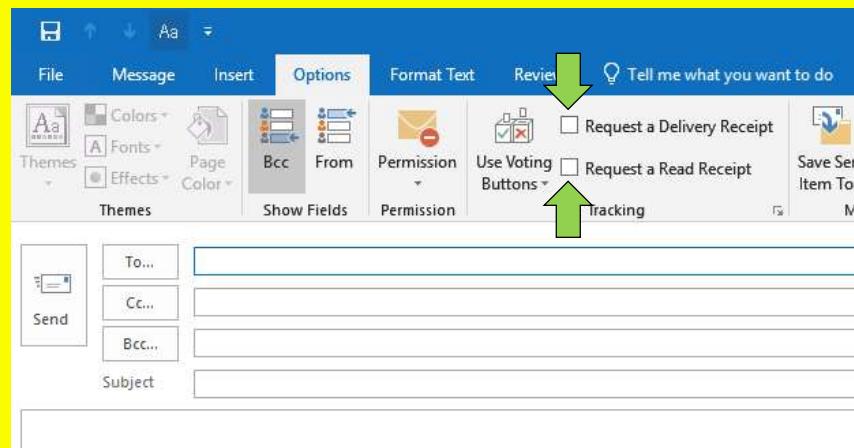
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FIRST E-IMPRESSIONS

- **Context matters**
  - **Friends do *not* communicate the same way as *colleagues***
- **Research indicates email 1st impressions matter more than in phone calls***
  - **Spelling/grammar mistakes**
  - **Offensive language**
  - **Off-color humor**

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  ***Winerman, L. (2006). "E-mails and egos." *Monitor on Psychology* 37(2):16*. American Psychological Association. < https://www.apa.org/monitor/feb06/egos.aspx >**

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DISCRETION IN EMAIL CRITICISM

- **Sources of disagreement**
  - **Fundamental assumptions**
  - **Vocabulary**
  - **Unspoken goals & values**
  - **Implicit reasoning**
  - **Missing information**
  - **Mistakes**
- **Avoid verbal hostility**
  - **Ad hominem remarks**
  - **Aggressive content**
- **TALK to the person if email gets rude!**

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HTML-FORMATTED EMAIL DOESN'T WORK RELIABLY

➢ **HTML email not guaranteed to look like what sender sent**
  - ❏ **Recipient's system may have** RADICALLY *different* font assignments
  - ❏ **Sizes** **may** differ **from** original
  - ❏ **Some characters altered (e.g., ' becomes ?)**
  - ❏ **Worst case: sending posters as HTML!**

➢ **If appearance *must* match, use**
  - ❏ **Acrobat PDF (include fonts)**
  - ❏ **Image (JPG, PNG….)**

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TO/CC + REPLY ALL = TROUBLE

➢ **TO: people who should reply**
➢ **CC: people who should be able to reply**
➢ **BCC: everyone else**
➢ **Trouble from REPLY ALL w/ visible distribution lists**
  - ❏ **Violate privacy**
  - ❏ **Cause mailstorms (see next slide)**
➢ **REPLY ALL restrictions**
  - ❏ **Don't REPLY ALL unless appropriate**
  - ❏ **THINK before using REPLY ALL**

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MAILSTORMS

- **Dec 2018: Utah state worker sends invitation to 25,000 recipients in TO: field for pot-luck dinner***
    - Some REPLY ALL with dietary preferences & "OK GREAT!" messages
    - Many send REPLY ALL asking to be removed from list
    - Others REPLY ALL to tell everyone to stop using REPLY ALL
    - Potentially crash mail servers
- **DO NOT PUT LARGE DISTRIBUTION LISTS IN TO: OR CC: – USE THE BCC FIELD**

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* Dumais, E. (2018). "Office Potluck Email Mistakenly Sent to 25,000 Employees, Reply-All Chaos Ensues." Thrilllist < https://www.thrillist.com/news/nation/utah-state-office-potluck-email-reply-all >

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BCC PREVENTS EMAIL NUISANCES

- **Listing extensive contacts in TO: or CC: may betray confidential information**
    - People may copy list to spam recipients
    - May betray operationally sensitive info
- **Worse if email goes to outside addresses**
    - May reveal organizational addresses that are supposed to be internal-only
    - E.g., specific participants on confidential projects

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BURYING YOUR EMAIL MESSAGE

- Errors that can delay having your message read
  - Using a non-descriptive subject line
  - Mixing critical information with non-critical info (especially if non-critical comes first)
- Always have clear, informative subject
- Put one critical topic per email
  - Use additional messages for additional topics
  - Avoid misleading subject fields
  - *See next slide*

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MISLEADING SUBJECT FIELDS

- REPLY automatically copies subject line & puts RE: in front
- But some users think REPLY is shortcut instead of NEW EMAIL
- Fail to correct subject line can cause trouble
  - Confusion
  - Message ignored or reading delayed
  - Irritation for all concerned
  - Topic: "Excellent supper yesterday" but email actually discusses daughter's cancer
- Use NEW EMAIL, not REPLY when *composing email on a new topic*

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FORWARDING CONFIDENTIAL INFO

➢ **Some information *must* be protected against public release by US laws:**

    ❑ **FERPA: student information**

    ❑ **HIPAA: medical information**

    ❑ **GLB/SoX: information that can influence stock prices**

    ❑ **Military applications**

➢ **Be cautious about distributing copies of email containing what the sender wants to be private**

    ❑ **Relative's hostility to another relative**

    ❑ **Sender's questionable activities (e.g., immigration issues)**

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EMAIL CARRYING MALWARE

➢ **Malware can generate email using fake origination addresses**

➢ **Some *phishing* email carries infected attachments (HTML, PDF, DOC[X]…)**

➢ **Many phishing emails have links that don't match appearance**

    ❑ **Link has 2 components**

        ✓ **Appearance – can look like good link**

        ✓ **Actual hyperlink – can be for criminals' Website**

    ❑ **ALWAYS look at lower left corner of email window or in popup to see *real* link (see next slide)**

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CHECK EVERY LINK BEFORE CLICKING IT
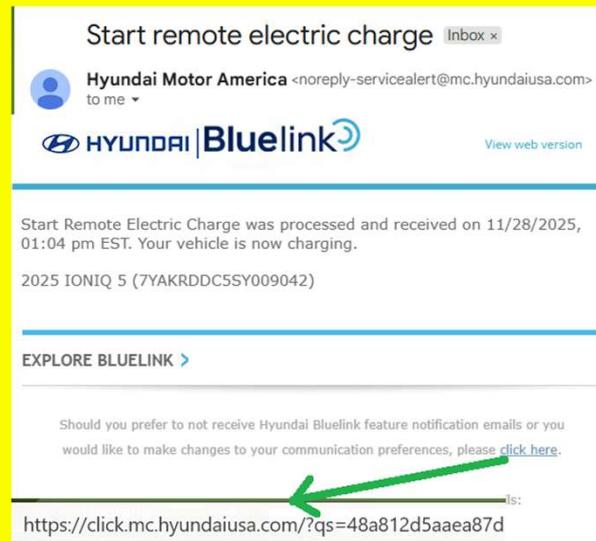
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THE KEEPER OF THE LISTS

- **Anyone can copy a visible (TO:, CC:) list**
- **But copies can become *outdated***
- **Best to use an official *Keeper of the Lists***
  - **Typically administrative assistant / secretary**
  - **Maintains email-distribution lists to specific groups; e.g., department, school; students, staff, faculty; committees, clubs; donors, volunteers….**
- **Messages for everyone in a specific group**
  - **Sent to *Keeper of the Lists***
  - **Guarantees up-to-date distribution**
  - **Also checks topic lines, used BCC, etc.**

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