Communicating by E-mail

E-mail Conventions

1. In the space below, write out a short, complete email to me, asking if you can take my course, ELI 434. Enrollment is full and so is the waiting list, but you would still like to take my section, which meets Wednesdays, 4-5:30PM. When you have written the message, please confer with your neighbor, get advice from each other, and make any modifications you want to.

Include the Subject Heading that you would write to get my attention. (Remember: Professor and Lecturers email inboxes are VERY full at the start of semesters!)
2. Match the greeting and closing that seem to go together and label each pair with the letter of the situation with which it seems to fit best. (You are JIM.)

a. Writing to a professor, Samuel Smith, you have been in class with for 2 months. He has said, “Call me Sam.” You are sending him late homework.

b. Writing to a professor, Samantha Smith, whom you don’t know to ask for a copy of a paper she has written but that hasn’t been published yet—your professor has recommended that you read the paper for a project you are doing in his class.

c. Writing to the person whose email (sbsmith@umich.edu) is listed on a flier advertising a student service club you think you would like to join.

d. Writing to a classmate, Sam, whom you have been assigned to work with, to set up a meeting time for the project the two of you will be doing together. You have talked together briefly in class and agreed to email each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Greetings</th>
<th>Closings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Dear Prof. Smith,</td>
<td>Jim Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Hi!</td>
<td>See you Monday,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Sam,</td>
<td>Thanks,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Hi Sam,</td>
<td>Yours Truly,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>James Adams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. Add another situation you think might occur in your e-mail correspondence, and give the greeting and closing you could use in that situation.

**Situation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greeting</th>
<th>Closing</th>
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E-mail Tips

1. Use the spell check and re-read your e-mail for errors before sending it, especially if the message is professional in nature.

2. Think about how to address the person you are writing to. “Hello Mrs. Mindy” and “Hello Matice” are not appropriate greetings. If you are unsure what to use, it is generally acceptable to use the person’s title and last name for people you don’t know and for those in a professional relationship, such as “Dr. Axelson,” “Ms. Matice,” or “Prof. Swales.” For fellow students first names are typically best. If you are responding to an e-mail message, look at how the person signed his or her name. If they wrote “Mindy,” then it is probably okay to address them as “Mindy.” “Hi Mindy” is commonly used in informal e-mail.

3. Think about how you sign your name as a way to tell the recipient how to address you. If you sign your full name, “Melinda Matice,” you may receive mail addressing you that way, as in “Dear Melinda Matice,” from people who don’t know you.

4. Be careful if you write a signature line for your e-mail. It will create an impression of you in the mind of the receiver, so should be grammatically accurate and spelled correctly, and also should be appropriate for friends and professional acquaintances alike.

5. Be sure to include a clear and short subject line.

6. Do not overuse punctuation marks. One exclamation point is usually enough. Avoid chat room shorthand in email to professors and colleagues outside of the chat room environment. For example, “GTG--W/B ASAP ; )” will be incomprehensible to many ordinary email users and may annoy them. Avoid using ALL CAPS because this is like shouting at the reader.

7. Do not use slang or informal spellings when sending messages to your instructors. While it’s perfectly fine to write “I’m gonna go to the library—see ya” to a friend, it is not appropriate to use “gonna” or “ya” in e-mail to your advisor.


9. For informal messages, closings such as “Sincerely” or “Yours Truly” are not needed. “Thanks (if you are requesting something), “Enjoy the weekend,” or something like “See you Tuesday” are good substitutes.

10. When sending homework as an e-mail attachment, be sure to put your name in the title of the document, for example, “matice32ohwk2.doc”.
Here is a message I received recently from a student who is enrolled in a course I teach this fall:

Answer the following questions with your partner:

1. What do you like about this message?

2. What improvements might you make? If there is something you don’t like about the message, write an alternative that you can share with the class.

3. Create a subject heading that is appropriate for the subject line.

SUBJECT:

Dear Prof. Matice,

I’m a grad student in the EECS department planning to attend your ELI 330 class this fall. Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend the first two classes (9/9 and 9/11) due to a conference presentation in Greece. Could you let me know about the materials you will cover during those days, so I can catch up your lectures?

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely,

William Lee

------------------------------------------------------------------------------
William Lee
Dept. of Electrical Engineering: Systems
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Cell 1-734-123-4567
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For Consideration:
1. How is email similar to (letter) written English?
2. How is email similar to spoken English?