Written communication

November 2014

Agenda

- *Think before emailing*
- *Composing email message*
  - ✔ *Subject*
  - ✔ *Email structure*
- *Relevant language to use*
- *Formatting emails*
- *General recommendations*

Definition

Written communication it's clear expression of ideas in writing; includes grammar, organization, and structure.

The purpose of effective written communication is to send a message with the intention of the recipient understanding the message and responding to it.

stakeholders

Think before emailing

Consider email purpose

✔ Written communication is appropriate in different situations, but may be inappropriate in others.
   Clearly identify the purpose of the message and action that you want the recipient to take after reading your message

✔ In order for communication to effective, it must be sent to the appropriate people.
   Agree the proper recipients of your email with your project manager, in case you are not sure they are the relevant ones.

Addressing email message

The *To* line

Clearly identify the recipients of your email message. They should be the persons, who are directly requested to perform a certain action.
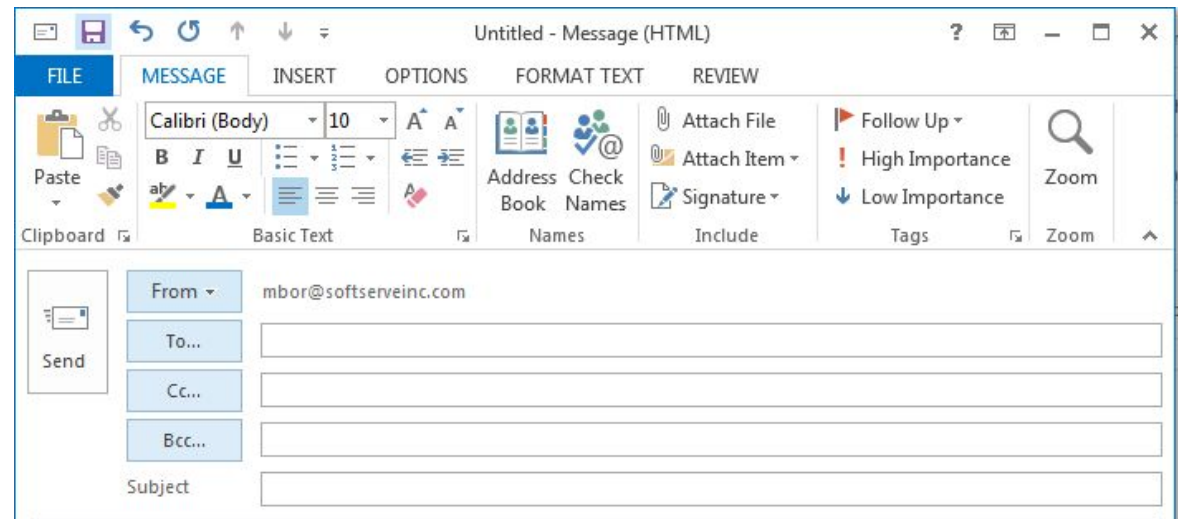
The *Cc* line

Cc means carbon copy. Here, enter the address of anyone you would like to receive a copy of your email.
No action or response should be expected of individuals on the *Cc* line. The recipient only needs to read and/or file the message.

The *Bcc* line

Bcc means blind carbon copy. If you want to send a copy of your email to another addressee, without the original recipient's awareness, put the address on the *Bcc* line.

Responding to emails

✔ Emails should be answered within at most 2 working hours.

✔ In rare cases when you cannot respond to the email within these 2 hours, send a reply informing the addressee of the time when he/she can expect your answer.

✔ The priority emails must be answered immediately.

✔ When answering email, make sure that you have dealt with every question raised by the sender. Do not omit any of them.
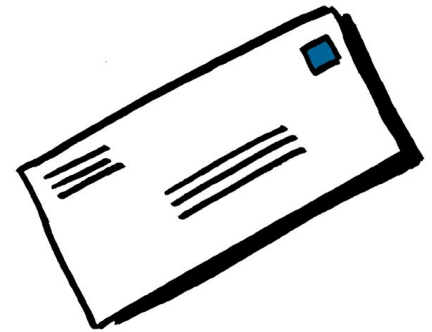
You are not expected to answer the email if you are in *Cc* list.
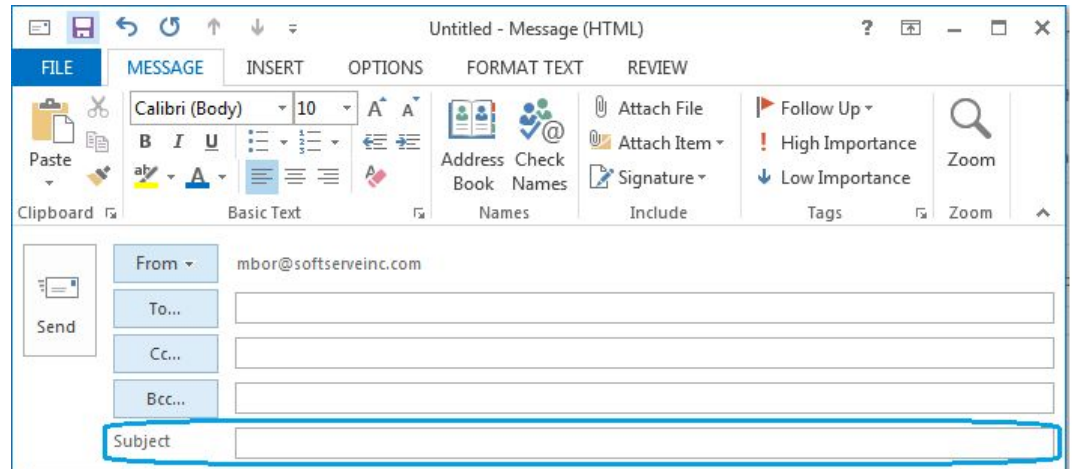
Composing email message

Email structure

✔ Subject

✔ Greeting

✔ Introduction

✔ E-mail body

✔ Signature

Subject

✔ The subject in email is mandatory

✔ The subject of an email should be meaningful

✔ Subject line should accurately summarize the body of the message.

Try to restrict yourself to one subject per message

Examples of email subject

- US 001 001 – Login – UI – changes related questions
- *Project name*: *Team 01*: Shortcut Keys and Hotkeys – Main Menu Common Items
- Server Side Configuration of Practice Management mode – changes

Email content: greeting

The greeting of your email massage can differ depending on the recipient's status and the letter style – formal, neutral, or informal.

Formal style
Dear Sir/Madam if you do not know the name of the person you are writing to
Dear Gentlemen / Dear Sir or Madam if you are writing to a company

Dear Mr + surname –a title used to address a man
Dear Mrs. + surname – a title used to address a married woman
Dear Miss + surname – a title used to address a single woman
Dear Ms. + surname – a title used before a woman's family name because it is not important to say whether she is married or not or when you do not know whether she is married or not. Many women prefer to be addressed as **Ms.** Rather than **Mrs. or Miss.** in business correspondence.

Neutral style
Dear + the unified attribute – if you are addressing a group of people.
For example: *Dear Project Managers, Dear Developers, Dear all, Dear everyone, Dear colleagues.*

Informal style
Dear Tom, Hello everyone, Hi, Hello.

Email content: introduction

In the introduction we clearly state the reason we are writing

✔ I am writing to you with reference to/in connection with...

✔ We have a few items to discuss regarding XXX YYY user story...

✔ During requirements' analysis I have found...

Email content: body

In the main body we develop our subject introducing each main point in a separate paragraph

✔ Short overview
✔ Description of question
✔ Suggestions (if applicable)
✔ Questions or Resume

Email body: suggestions

We see two ways of implementation:

      – first way;

      – second way;

Please let us know your opinion.

or

Please let us know how we should proceed with this.

or

Please let us know what way works for you.

Email body: questions

✔ Please let us know what ... should be ...?

✔ Please let us know behavior of the system.

✔ Can you, please, give me the details of ...?

Email body: resume

✔ Please let us know your thoughts.

✔ Please confirm.

✔ Please clarify.

✔ Please approve.

Example of email body

Bill,

We have a question about 'Information' field on 'Patient Info' page.

Now user is able to enter unlimited number of symbols in this field, however system will save only the first 1000 symbols.
If the user enters more than 1000 characters – symbols over 1000 will be cut off and will not be saved.
Is it Ok?
Or, do we need to limit the typing area with 1000 characters so that user can visually see that more symbols cannot be entered in this field?

Behavior in legacy app for this field is the same.

Thank you,
Petro Petrov

Example of email body

Bill,

The screen's title in the existing application is "Open Window".
In the new UI functions are going to be opened on the Workspaces (tabs) rather than in separate windows.
Please refer to the screenshot below:
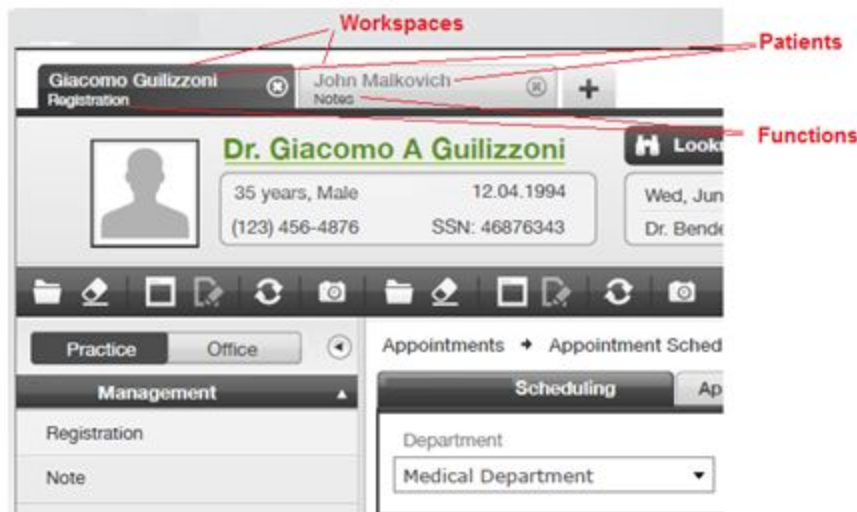
So, 'Open Window' title loses its sense at all.
We propose to rename popup with F9 feature to 'Select Function'.

Please let us know your thoughts regarding this.

Example of email body

Hi Bill,

We are working on user story for Patient Lookup search on Patient Management>Registration and I have following questions:

1) How **Inactive Patients** should be displayed in search results grid?

   In specification it's mentioned that Inactive Patient names are shaded in muted yellow and are listed at the end of the search results.

   But in Help values in columns for inactive patients are crossed out (please refer to screenshot below).

   We assume that Help is not up to date and they should be crossed?
   Please advise.

Signature

✔ If you begin a letter with **Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss + surname** you end with
✔ **Yours Sincerely.**

✔ If you start with **Dear Sir/Madam** you end with **Yours truly/Yours faithfully.**

✔ If you use **Dear, Hi, Hello,** you end with **Best regards, Regards, Best wishes, All the best.**

Thanks in advance,
Petro Petrov
QC Expert

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Use the automatic signature

Relevant language to use

Relevant language to use

✔ **Write concisely and be direct**
Be direct and to the point in setting out for the reader the issues that you wish to address.

✔ **Don't use the excessive punctuation**
You see lots of email messages with a dozen exclamation points at the end of a sentence for added emphasis. Remember, if something is important it should be reflected in your text.

✔ **Don't type in capitals**
Online, writing in capitals means shouting. Regardless of your intention, people will react as if you meant to be aggressive.

✔ **Proofread – before sending reread the message**
Take the time to make your message look professional. When you are sending a message that will be read by someone higher up on the chain of command (a superior or professor, for instance), or if you are about to mass–mail dozens or thousands of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit *Send*. Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

Relevant language to use

✔ **Use abbreviations that are already common in the English language**

FYI – for your information

ASAP – as soon as possible

BTW – by the way

IMHO – in my humble opinion

AKA – also known as

TBD – to be defined

Abbreviation usage is quite uncertain with email.
Beyond the expressions above (commonly accepted and widely used in English language), you run into the risk of confusing your recipient.

Formatting emails

Formatting emails

✔ **Keep paragraphs short**
Paragraphs should be no more than five or six lines long.

✔ **Watch font size**
Avoid fonts that are smaller than 10 points or larger than 12 points (except in headlines or to embed details). Also, remember that writing in all capitals is considered shouting and is often perceived as aggressive and rude.

✔ **Use "white space"**
Use white space — empty space on the screen — to separate paragraphs and areas of detail. The white space helps to ease the transition from one subject to another.

Formatting emails

✔ **Use bullets and tables**

Lists and tables help the reader identify the key points in a condensed format that is separate from the text.

But make sure the customer's mail system will reflect the formatting properly, that is why it is better to answer the letter in the same format of the letter received. If you received the letter in HTML format, keep the same format when answering.

✔ **Use priority indicators**

Take the advantage of using the important indicator to let recipients know that you have sent them an important message.

A message flag can be used to mark the message and make it easy to scan the Inbox and find it again, either as a reminder for you or to catch a recipient's attention.
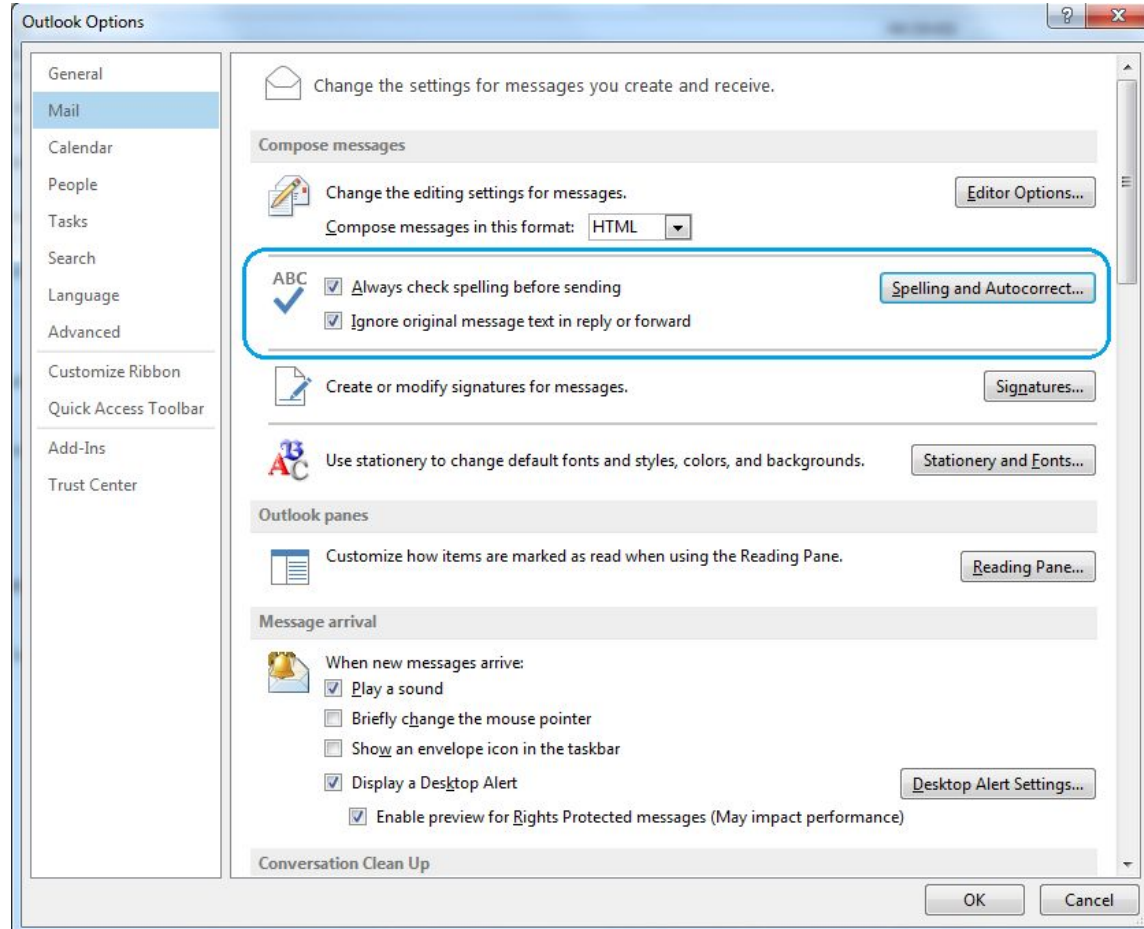
Formatting emails

✔ **Use spell checking option when composing email message**

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Thank you