



We've all heard that the majority of communication is non-verbal. When communicating with our colleagues in person we interpret their words based on many factors such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Given that the majority of us will now be communicating via email or instant message it is important that we compose our messages with care so as to avoid misunderstandings that may result from the lack of non-verbal cues. While our new reality may have most of us crafting work emails from home while wearing our favourite pajamas and fuzzy slippers (and perhaps a little four-legged furry friend snoring at our feet) it is important to remember that electronic communications should still relay the same respectful tone you would use when communicating in person.

To the end here are a few tips to consider when crafting your next message.

1. Start your messages with a greeting. An appropriate greeting, like "hello" or "good morning" can set a positive and professional tone for the message to follow. A message without a greeting may unintentionally do the opposite. Would you walk into your colleagues' office in the morning and start talking about a project without first greeting them? (Hopefully not!)
2. Ensure you are referring to others with their preferred name and pronoun. If you do not know someone's pronoun preference you can use "they" or "them." This is a great time to practice Gender Neutral pronoun usage.
3. DO NOT USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS (it is equivalent to yelling).
4. Overuse of punctuation can unintentionally alter the tone of your comment. Do you really need all those question marks????? I doubt it!!!
5. Think twice before sending that "joke" or meme. If you wouldn't share it in a workplace meeting for all to see then you probably shouldn't send it by email.
6. If you find yourself feeling frustrated or upset while writing a message take a pause to review it later, before pressing send. Never email angry. Hint: remove the recipient's email address until you have taken the pause.
7. While differences of opinion and constructive feedback are a normal part of any workplace be mindful of your word choice and audience when sharing your feedback. Consider whether your comments may be more appropriate to address in a one-on-one email as opposed to a group message.
8. Remember to look at your own communications objectively before sending them. Is there anything that could be misconstrued? Is that "wink" emoji really sending the tone you want?
9. When reading an email give others the benefit of the doubt you would want others to give to you. Do not make assumptions about what the writer "really meant." If it is not clear, ask.
10. Don't forget to say "please" and "thank you" and end your message with an appropriate conclusion like "Best regards." A little gratitude and good manners costs nothing and can go a long way during this challenging time.