

Email List Etiquette

OUUC uses Google Groups and other email lists to communicate within committees and with the congregation as a whole. Email is a fundamentally different type of communication, in which it is difficult to express and relate emotional content. It is also easy to misread this type of communication in a negative way.

Each committee has its own rules of list etiquette, based on the agreement of the members, but the following are some general etiquette guidelines:

- Remember – it is next to impossible to convey emotion in email. It is almost always guaranteed that someone will read your message in the worst possible light. Write accordingly. If you're writing about something that you may be passionate about, it is best to draft your message and put it aside, coming back to it after several hours or overnight so you can read it again and see if it conveys the message you're really trying to get across.
- Don't reply if you don't have anything to say: Put that way, this rule seems pretty obvious. But lots of people post messages that simply say "Me too!" or "I agree!" This can add significantly to the number of messages people receive, without necessarily adding meaning.
- Avoid fancy fonts, backgrounds or "templates": Send messages in plain text, without HTML formatting.
- Use descriptive subject lines: When writing a new message or replying to a message, make sure that the subject line describes your message as specifically as possible. Never send a message with the subject "Help!" when it could say "Need 4th grade curriculum about Islam."
- Identify yourself: Most email programs let you define a signature which appears at the end of each message you send. Your signature should be no more than four lines long and should include your name and email address; you might also include your website (if any), and a pithy quote or tag line.
- When replying, include only the relevant part of the original message: Most email programs provide a way to "quote" the text of the message you are replying to. When people read your reply, they may not remember exactly which message you are replying to, so including the quote puts your message in context. On the other hand, delete the parts of the quote that aren't relevant, so each reader doesn't have to wade through headers, signatures, and other stuff that doesn't pertain to your message.
- Reply privately when your message isn't of interest to the group: When you reply to a message, consider whether to send your reply to the mailing list or to the person who wrote the message. If you want to make a point that contributes to the group discussion, post your reply to the mailing

list. If you want to criticize, ask a personal question, or ask something off the topic of the list, send your reply directly to the person who wrote the message.

- Don't post chain letters and virus messages: It doesn't matter how worthy the chain letter sounds! Don't post messages to a list unless you personally know the information in it to be true (known Internet scams are listed at [Symantec's Threat Explorer](#) or [Snopes](#)). Most messages about computer viruses have proven to be bogus, so don't waste everyone's time with them. Ditto for sending postcards to dying children or news flashes about proposed internet taxes. Messages that purport to help you "make money fast" are, like all pyramid schemes, illegal. Just say no—delete chain letters and don't pass them along.
- If you find an interesting article on the web, please COPY the text of the article into your message - don't just send a blind hyperlink. With the things hackers can do these days, clicking a link you're not sure of can be as bad as handing the keys to your car to a thief. If you need to send a link, write descriptive text and learn how to properly embed the link in your email program (usually highlight the **text you want to link**, right click and select "hyperlink" from the menu. Then paste the web address (URL) into the address line, and the text will turn into a link.