



Susanne Gaddis, PhD



Susanne Gaddis PhD  
**The Communications Doctor**

*"Prescriptions for Effective Communication"*  
www.CommunicationsDoctor.com  
Gaddis@CommunicationsDoctor.com

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## Prescriptions for Effective E-mail

Dear Communications Doctor,  
Are there guidelines you can share with regard to writing effective e-mails?  
Anne-Marie - Austin, TX

Dear Josh,  
With electronic communications on the increase, here are some simple prescriptions to keep your e-mails professional:

**Prescription #1 – Use a Greeting.** A simple salutation that includes the recipient's name such as "Hello Anne" or "Anne" serves as a way to be more warm and interpersonal. It also increases the likelihood that the e-mail will be read. When communicating to a group, include a warm salutation such as, "Hello All," "Greetings Everyone," or "Greetings Morning Shift Team."

**Prescription #2-** Always include a subject line. With people receiving hundreds of e-mail daily, subject lines help the receiver determine the importance of the communication. If your message requires a reply, put "RSVP," in your subject line. If it requires an urgent reply, put, "URGENT REPLY NEEDED." If the content of your e-mail is informational, include, "FYI" in your subject line. The more specific your subject line, the better. For instance, an e-mail with a subject line: "RSVP: Meeting Agenda - Dec. 14, 2002" is more specific and likely to be opened and attended to than an e-mail simply titled "Meeting."

**Prescription #3 – Get to the point.** Keep your e-mails short and simple. By including the most important information up front you'll save the recipient precious time. Make it a habit to ask for what you need in the first paragraph. If you think about your e-mail as an inverted pyramid, place the important information at the top, with supporting information to follow.

**Prescription #4 -** Use the CC button sparingly. Send a carbon copy only to those who really need to see the e-mail. Doing otherwise, contributes to what I refer to as E.I.E.I.O. (Everyone Is Experiencing Information Overload). This is what happens when you have, "An e-mail here, and an e-mail there. Here an e-mail, there an e-mail, everywhere an e-mail, e-mail."

**Prescription #5 -** Put an extra space between paragraphs. Communicate more effectively through this visual medium by making your paragraphs no more than five to seven lines long. Also, include an extra space between paragraphs and you'll make your e-mail easier on the recipient's eyes.

**Prescription #6 -** Don't write anything that you wouldn't want the world to know. Remember that with the touch of a button, your e-mail can be forwarded to Human Resources or your manager and kept as a part of your permanent record. Never send an e-mail when angry or frustrated. Also, be extra careful when crafting your e-mail so as not to offend. As a general rule, when in doubt, don't hit the send button.

**Prescription #7 –** Use spell check. There is no excuse for poor grammar and spelling errors in e-mail. Remember that every e-mail you send is a reflection on you professionally.

**Prescription #8 –** Use capital letters sparingly. Writing in caps is considered screaming. Capital letters can be used for emphasis, **BUT DON'T OVERUSE THEM OK!**

**Prescription #9-** Include a signature. Most e-mail programs will allow you to create a signature that can be easily applied to the bottom of each e-mail. A professional signature includes your name, title, place of employment, phone number, e-mail address, and company Web site. I have also seen individuals include their companies or their own mission statement.

*Susanne Gaddis, PhD, known as the Communications Doctor, is an acknowledged communications expert who has been speaking and teaching the art of effective and positive communication since 1989. Gaddis' workshops, seminars, and keynote presentations are packed with tips and techniques that can be immediately applied for successful results. Gaddis also provides quality training and executive coaching for organizations, corporations, and associations across the United States. For more information, call 919-933-3237 or visit [www.CommunicationsDoctor.com](http://www.CommunicationsDoctor.com).*