Things to Keep in Mind When You Email Instructors/Professors:

Before you email your instructor/professor:
- If at all possible, email your instructor/professor from official university email. There are many reasons you should do this, but first among them is that official university email clearly identifies you by the same name as course rosters, making it easier to figure out who sent the email (especially early in the semester, when names might be harder to match to faces).
- If you have a question about the course, an assignment, due dates, etc., be sure to check the course syllabus, assignment prompt, and/or other resources (like a course website) before sending an email. If you still can’t find what you’re looking for, mention that you looked through the syllabus/other course materials (and maybe acknowledge you might have just missed it), and that you can’t find an answer to your question/concern.
- Check to see if your instructor/professor has a policy about when they will respond to emails. This doesn’t mean that you can’t send an email whenever you need, but keep in mind if your instructor has said in a syllabus or in class that they won’t respond to emails after 6 pm, don’t expect a response during that time.
- Remember that while many emails will have a similar structure, you’ll want to recognize that you’ll have to approach each email differently, depending on the reason for the email, your relationship with/to the instructor/professor, and your previous contact with the instructor/professor.
- If at all possible, email your instructor/professor BEFORE a problem comes up, rather than during. It’s much easier to make arrangements if your instructor/professor knows a week ahead of time that you’ll be missing class, or even an hour ahead of time. It’s also a lot easier to talk through problems in an assignment or to negotiate an extension or similar matter when it’s done at least a couple days in advance, rather than five minutes before the assignment is due.

Opening/Salutation and Subject Line:
- Email structure when emailing a professor should look, for the most part, like a letter. This means it should have a salutation/opening (Hello Dr. Wisniewski), the body/content, and a closing (Sincerely, Evin Groundwater).
- If this is your first time emailing the professor, be sure to fully introduce yourself by your full name (and nickname if you go by something else), including what class you are in (if you’re in one) and what section.
- Always use a salutation/opening with at least the first email in a thread and never assume formality with a name. Only address an instructor/professor by their preferred title and name (if you know that preference; it’s always okay to ask them what they prefer), and if you don’t know their preferred title and name, use a default, like Dear [Full Name], or at the very least, Instructor/Professor [Last Name].
- Never assume the gender of an instructor or professor, regardless of their name, unless you’ve been explicitly invited to address them as Mr./Ms./Mrs. [Name].
- Always use a subject line, and be sure to explicitly state the reason for the email
  - For example: “Subject: I’m going to miss class on Thursday, October 13th; or “Subject: Question regarding my thesis for the essay due Friday, September 24th”
- Don’t flag an email as important (red exclamation point) unless it’s an email that needs to be responded to as soon as possible.

Content/Body:
• Be as clear as you possibly can about why you’re emailing your professor as simply and briefly as you can. You might even begin your email with something like “I’m emailing you because I had a question about…”
• Do not write a long email if you can avoid it. Remember that your instructor/professor might be responding to dozens of emails a day (not including emails they have to send themselves), so try to keep it as short and to the point as possible without sounding too informal or rude.
• When writing an email to your instructor/professor, don’t feel the need to apologize more than once (if an apology is appropriate, ex: Sorry that I missed class today…), and remember that answering your questions and responding to your concerns is part of what they do as an instructor/professor.
• Be careful not to overshare or overexplain; most professors will believe you if you simply say that you’re sick or that it just wasn’t possible to make it to class that day, with no further explanation needed (that goodwill begins to wear thin after the third or fourth missed class, however…). If it’s an absence or a late assignment that is not likely to be made up or have a negotiated turn-in date (always know an instructor’s/professor’s attendance or late assignment policy and acknowledge it before you ask them to bend/break it for you), most of the time, explaining the situation too thoroughly won’t help anyway.
• If the reason you’re writing the instructor/professor is time-sensitive, it’s good to let them know that as politely as you can (if you would like to write a letter of recommendation for me, it would be great to have it by X/X/XXXX in order to get it in by the deadline…). Part of this, however, is being sure to give an instructor/professor enough time to respond without being rushed or feeling pressured. Make sure to email instructors/professors at least 2 weeks ahead of a due date if you’re asking them for materials/documents like a letter of recommendation.

Closing:

• Always have some kind of closing. At the very least, close with a “Sincerely,” or “Best”. It also never hurts to thank someone again for taking the time to help you out, especially if they’re not currently an instructor/professor for one of your classes, or if you’re asking for a favor they aren’t obligated to do.

Checklist for Instructor/Professor Email Etiquette:

Did you:

✓ Use a subject line that clearly and briefly identifies what the email is about?
✓ Include some kind of greeting/salutation?
✓ Identify the instructor/professor by preferred title and name?
✓ Check course syllabus and resources to see if you could solve your problem through those?
✓ Introduce yourself by full name (if this is first time emailing instructor/professor)?
✓ Clearly and briefly describe your question, concern, or reason for emailing in the first couple lines of the email?
✓ Explain the situation quickly without oversharign/overexplaining?
✓ Identify a time you need to hear back by (if email is time-sensitive)?
✓ Include some kind of closing and/or thank the instructor/professor for their help?