

E-MAIL TIPS

1. Estimate how much time e-mail activity is consuming on an average day.
2. Use the five decisions model to handle incoming e-mails (practice each of the five decisions).
3. Develop good processing habits for each of the five decisions (out of "in-box" ASAP).
4. Train people to send you short messages whenever possible.
5. Send short messages whenever possible.
6. Train people to send you clear messages, try not to use the word 'it' .. be more specific.
7. Send clear messages.
8. Train people to use headlining techniques in the subject line (use newspaper headline techniques).
9. Rename subject or title line if it will help you process the message.
10. Physically (ergonomically) locate your computer for ease of use.
11. Consider increasing computer processing speed.
12. Consider increasing e-mail service provider speed.
13. Improve screen reading skills (Read *More, Faster... On Screen* by Pam Mullan)
14. Set parameters for e-mail use (e.g. should I handle this over the phone or in person?)
15. Evaluate decision-making and personality traits related to e-mail activity.
16. Reduce stress and busy-ness and focus on what really matters when processing e-mails.
17. Clarify your purpose and priorities so you can effectively evaluate the importance of e-mails.
18. Consider the need to delegate or redirect some of your e-mail activity.
19. Improve your delegation attitude and skills.
20. Improve your ability to judge how long it will take you to reply to an e-mail.
21. Establish a simple and effective follow up filing system for e-mail.
22. Consider increasing the speed of your printer.
23. Improve your task transition habits (how long does it take you to move to the next task?).
24. Do not use your e-mail "in-box" as a storage place.
25. Switch to alternate communication methods if consistently overloaded (notify others).
26. In extreme cases, shut down your current system and establish new address.
27. Maintain a separate address for possible abusers (retail stores, etc.)
28. Learn to use filters, blocking and tools effectively.
29. Improve keyboarding skills.
30. Stop unnecessary e-mails at the source.
31. Adopt an "Empty in-box" policy
32. Set aside blocks of time to process e-mails
33. Acknowledge that problems with e-mail are ultimately the responsibility of the user.
34. When you are using an email for back and forth communication, be sure to keep the thread.. always reply to the latest email from the other party.. DO NOT start a new email!!

Pareto Principle List of E-mail Tips (20% of the above 37 items)

Use the five decisions model to handle incoming e-mails (practice each of the five decisions).

Develop good processing habits for each of the five decisions (out of "in-box" ASAP).

Train people to send you short messages whenever possible.

Train people to send you clear messages.

Train people to use headlining techniques in the subject line.

Stop using e-mail for things it was never designed to handle.

Maintain a separate address for possible abusers.

Adopt an "Empty In-box" Policy

Note: If you currently have a huge backlog of unprocessed e-mails, these need to be considered a separate (high-priority) project and deleted or processed before you develop new e-mail habits.

Buy the book "[Bit Literacy](http://bitliteracy.com/)" by Mark Hurst at <http://bitliteracy.com/>

Some interesting statistics:

About **24% of companies have had employee emails subpoenaed** by a court or regulator, up from 20% two years ago. 15% have gone to court to defend against lawsuits triggered by an employee email, up from 13% two years ago according to the 2006 Workplace E-Mail, Instant Messaging and Blog survey released by the American Management Association and the ePolicy Institute, in Columbus, Ohio. *Wall Street Journal*, 07/2006

More than one in twenty U.S. adults surveyed nationally said their **relationships have suffered from excessive use of the Internet**. 12% said they often stay online more than they would like to. 14% say it is difficult to stay offline for several days. *Elias Abonjaoude, Stanford University, Impulse Control Disorder Clinic.*

PROCESS OF HANDLING A SIMPLE E-MAIL

1. Open and read variables:

Access speed (how quickly can I get to it)

Reading speed

Length of message

Clarity of message

Nature of message (communication factors... words, voice tone, body language that need to be involved to effectively communicate or, back and forth dialogue required)

Influential factors:

Location of computer

Computer on/off

Computer processing speed

Speed of e-mail service provider

Screen reading skills

Number of words

Clarity of writing

Simple or complex communication?

2. Make a choice (one of five):

1) Delete (12 seconds)

Influential factors:

Decision-making skills and personality wiring (for example - perfectionist and procrastination issues).

Level of stress (ability to access the thinking systems of the brain)

Clarity of purpose and priorities (does this fit or not?)

2). Delegate (48 seconds)

Influential factors:

Someone to handle delegated items?

Delegation attitude (willingness to delegate)

Delegation skills

3). Take immediate action (30 seconds)

Influential Factors:

Decision-making skills and personality wiring (for example - perfectionist and procrastination issues).

Level of stress (ability to access the thinking systems of the brain)

Clarity of purpose and priorities (does this fit or not?)

Judgment of how long it will take to reply to the message

Length of response

Complexity of response

4) File for follow up (56 seconds)

Influential factors:

Decision-making skills and personality wiring (for example -perfectionist and procrastination issues).

Level of stress (ability to access the thinking systems of the brain)

Clarity of purpose and priorities (does this fit or not?)

Simplicity and effectiveness of follow up filing system.

Printer speed

5) Reference file (49 seconds)

Influential factors:

Decision-making skills and personality wiring (for example -perfectionist and procrastination issues).

Level of stress (ability to access the thinking systems of the brain)

Clarity of purpose and priorities (does this fit or not?)

Simplicity and effectiveness of reference filing system

Printer speed (maybe?)

Closure- move on to the next task (7 seconds)

Influential factors:

Work habits — How focused are you? How long does it take you to gear up for the next task?

Other influential factors:

"Blackberry Factor" — Running dual systems

$12 + 7 = 19$ seconds (shortest processing time)

$56 + 7 = 63$ seconds (longest processing time)

Your processing time on most e-mails will be longer unless you are dealing with a shorter message and have excellent processing skills and systems (multitasking will expand the time to process e-mails and the problems related to processing e-mails).