

Email & Communication Etiquette Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | June 2026

Important Notice

This template is provided as a general guide only and should be customised to suit your specific business needs. We recommend having this policy reviewed before implementation to ensure it aligns with your organisation's culture and communication practices.

1. Purpose

[Company Name] is committed to maintaining professional, respectful, and effective communication across all channels. This policy provides guidelines for email and other forms of workplace communication to ensure clarity, professionalism, and compliance with relevant legislation.

Effective communication is fundamental to our business success, team collaboration, and client relationships. These guidelines help protect our organisation's reputation while supporting a positive workplace culture.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees (full-time, part-time, and casual)
- Contractors and temporary staff
- Anyone using company communication systems

This policy covers all forms of workplace communication, including:

- Email (internal and external)
- Instant messaging platforms (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams)
- Video conferencing and virtual meetings
- Phone calls and voicemail
- Written correspondence and memos
- Client and customer communications

3. Email Etiquette

3.1 General Principles

- Treat every email as a professional document that could be read by anyone
- Consider whether email is the most appropriate communication method for your message

- Keep emails concise and focused on one topic where possible
- Re-read emails before sending to check for clarity, tone, and errors
- Respond to emails within one business day, even if just to acknowledge receipt

3.2 Subject Lines

- Use clear, descriptive subject lines that summarise the email content
- Update the subject line if the topic changes during an email chain
- Use prefixes where helpful (e.g., "ACTION REQUIRED:", "FYI:", "URGENT:")
- Avoid vague subjects such as "Hello", "Question", or blank subject lines

3.3 Email Structure

A professional email should include:

- Appropriate greeting (e.g., "Hi [Name]," or "Dear [Name],")
- Clear purpose stated early in the email
- Relevant details organised in short paragraphs or bullet points
- Clear action items or next steps (if applicable)
- Professional sign-off and email signature

3.4 Tone and Language

- Use a professional, courteous tone appropriate to the recipient
- Avoid using all capitals (THIS READS AS SHOUTING)
- Be mindful that written communication lacks vocal tone cues
- Avoid sarcasm, which can be easily misinterpreted
- Use "please" and "thank you" appropriately
- Avoid slang, abbreviations, and excessive exclamation marks in formal communications

3.5 CC and BCC Usage

- Only CC people who genuinely need to be informed
- Use BCC when sending to large groups to protect email addresses
- Be cautious about "Reply All" – consider who really needs to receive your response
- When forwarding emails, check if all content is appropriate to share

3.6 Attachments

- Reference attachments in the email body
- Use descriptive file names
- Compress large files or use file-sharing services for files over 10MB
- Be cautious with sensitive documents – consider password protection
- Double-check you have attached the correct file before sending

4. Instant Messaging Etiquette

4.1 Appropriate Use

- Use for quick questions, informal coordination, and time-sensitive matters
- Keep messages brief and to the point
- Don't use for complex discussions that would benefit from email or a meeting
- Respect colleagues' focus time – check their status before expecting immediate responses

4.2 Best Practices

- Set your status to reflect your availability (available, busy, away, do not disturb)
- Use @mentions judiciously to avoid notification fatigue
- Keep group channels focused on their intended purpose
- Move conversations to private messages when they become detailed or sensitive
- Be mindful that messages may be retained and auditable

4.3 Response Expectations

- Immediate response is not always expected – respect focused work time
- If urgent, say so clearly or use phone/video call instead
- During working hours, aim to respond to direct messages within a few hours
- Outside working hours, messages can wait until the next business day

5. Video Conferencing Etiquette

5.1 Before the Meeting

- Test your audio and video before the meeting starts
- Choose a quiet location with appropriate background
- Have meeting materials ready
- Join 1-2 minutes early to address any technical issues

5.2 During the Meeting

- Mute yourself when not speaking to reduce background noise
- Look at the camera when speaking to create eye contact
- Avoid multitasking – give the meeting your full attention
- Use the chat function appropriately for questions or sharing links
- Be mindful of your facial expressions and body language

5.3 Meeting Facilitation

- Start on time and end on time
- Have a clear agenda shared in advance
- Encourage participation from all attendees

- Summarise key decisions and action items at the end
- Send follow-up notes with action items and deadlines

6. Phone Communication

6.1 Making Calls

- Identify yourself and your organisation when calling externally
- Be prepared with the purpose of your call
- Ask if it's a convenient time to talk
- Keep calls focused and professional

6.2 Receiving Calls

- Answer calls promptly and professionally
- Identify yourself when answering
- Take messages accurately and relay them promptly
- Return calls within one business day

6.3 Voicemail

- Keep your voicemail greeting professional and up to date
- When leaving voicemail, speak clearly and include your name, contact number, and reason for calling
- Check and respond to voicemails regularly

7. Written Correspondence

When sending formal letters or written documents on behalf of the organisation:

- Use official letterhead for external correspondence
- Follow standard business letter format
- Proofread carefully before sending
- Retain copies of important correspondence
- Seek approval for sensitive or contractual communications

8. Client and Customer Communication

- Always represent the organisation professionally
- Respond to client enquiries promptly
- Set clear expectations about response times
- Escalate complaints or complex issues appropriately
- Follow up on commitments made
- Document important client communications
- Maintain confidentiality of client information

9. Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is strictly prohibited in any form of workplace communication:

- Harassment, bullying, or discrimination
- Offensive, obscene, or sexually explicit content
- Defamatory statements about individuals or organisations
- Sharing confidential or proprietary information without authorisation
- Sending chain letters, spam, or unsolicited mass emails
- Using company systems for personal commercial activities
- Impersonating others or using false identities
- Engaging in any illegal activity

10. Privacy and Confidentiality

All employees must understand and comply with the following:

- Company communication systems are company property and may be monitored
- Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using company systems
- Confidential information must be protected and not shared inappropriately
- Personal information must be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988
- Take care when discussing sensitive matters – consider who might overhear or read your communications

11. Communication Security

- Be vigilant about phishing emails and suspicious links
- Report suspicious emails to IT immediately
- Never share passwords via email or messaging
- Use secure channels for sensitive information
- Lock your computer when leaving your desk
- Be cautious about discussing confidential matters in public spaces

12. Out of Hours Communication

[Company Name] respects employees' right to disconnect outside working hours. Unless there is a genuine emergency:

- Employees are not expected to respond to emails or messages outside their normal working hours
- Managers should be mindful of timing when sending communications
- Consider scheduling emails to be sent during business hours
- Urgent after-hours matters should be communicated by phone call

13. Breaches of This Policy

Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action, which could include:

- Verbal or written warning
- Restrictions on use of communication systems
- Required training
- Termination of employment for serious breaches

Employees who experience or witness inappropriate communication should report it to their manager or HR.

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when there are significant changes to:

- Communication technology or platforms used
- Legislation or regulatory requirements
- Business operations or practices

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Email & Communication Etiquette Policy. I agree to comply with the requirements of this policy and understand that failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by (Manager): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____