

# SIMS Technical Writing: Email

Our first assignment will be to review and practice basic email skills that carry you through college and your professional career. It is very important to remember that sending emails to professors and employers is nothing like the casual messages we email and text to friends and families; they are far more formal and structured. A number of helpful suggestions are included within the links for this assignment on the Readings/Viewings page of our course website. Meanwhile, here are a few pointers for the four email fields that appear at the top of all email messages:

- **From:** Your email address prefix (the part before the “@” symbol) should consist of your first and/or last name, e.g., “Bill.Smith@domain.com,” “b.smith@domain.com, or simply “smith@domain.com.” Never use pseudonymous email addresses like “SurferDog123” and “Boomer”; these may be fine for family and friends who know you, but they have *no* place when corresponding with professors and employers. It should require just a glance at the “From” field for recipients to know that *you* are the sender.
- **Subject:** Make subject lines as brief — but descriptive — as possible, tailored to each message. Avoid blank and ambiguous subject lines. For example, if you are sending an assignment to a professor, use a subject line such as “Math 3A - Assignment 5 - Bill Smith.” If you are turning in a report to an employer, use something like “Lab results for tensile strength test,” etc. Again, keep subject lines descriptive but short.
- **Date:** Emails are dated automatically by your email software or computer server. That being said, it is often helpful to include key dates within messages and even subject lines to differentiate one message from another. Never assume your recipient is immediately familiar with previous messages. It is best to identify them by date. For example: “Per my previous email of 15 August 2016, please find the report you requested attached.”
- **To:** This field may be automatically selected from a list of addresses, or entered manually by you. Be sure to use an email address that your recipient checks frequently.

## ***“How should I address my instructors in messages?”***

Here too, emails to professors and employers differ significantly from those we send to friends and family members. Unless your professor has indicated otherwise—and especially at the start of each quarter while you are getting acquainted—always address your professors as “Professor Smith,”<sup>1</sup> etc. Many professors in the USA prefer to be called and emailed by their first names; however, you should wait until they have indicated this preference to drop “Professor.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The address “Professor” is typically applied to both full and assistant college professors, lecturers, and TAs. It is a traditional honorific, not unlike “Captain” used aboard ships to address both commissioned and enlisted officers in command, whether they hold the actual rank of captain or not.

<sup>2</sup> Should you formally address someone who holds a PhD with the title of “Doctor” or “Professor?” The term “Professor” applies exclusively to educational settings; however, in industry and elsewhere the term “Doctor” is used on correspondence. In the USA, do not use more than one title in correspondence. For example, never address a letter to “Prof. Dr. Bill Smith, PhD.” Use either just “Dr. Bill Smith” (preferred in industry), or “Bill Smith, PhD.” In educational settings, “Prof. Bill Smith” would be the typical address.

### ***“Should my email include a signature line?”***

When using UCSB Umail for school-related and personal correspondence, this depends upon how private you wish to keep your personal contact information. However, for employment-related emails, an institutional address is requisite. Most email software allows you to have a signature line that can be selectively added to messages, depending upon your privacy needs. Typically, email signature lines include your name, title (if any), a mailing address, phone number, and email address. For example:

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Bill Smith, Lab Manager  
Acme Industries, Inc.  
1234 Main Street, Suite A  
Sometown, CA 93123  
bill.smith@domain.com  
(805) 680-2333

### **Tasks**

- Send me a brief (1-2 paragraph) email with general details about your current plans and interests in science; these should correspond to your upcoming IDP. Generally speaking, where would you like to be in 5, 10, and 15 years from now? If you wish, tell me a little bit about your background: where you grew up, interests and activities, influences, etc.
- **From:** Use an email address with your name in the prefix, as described above.
- **Subject:** SIMS email assignment - your name
- **To:** doug@dougbradley.net Please address me for this assignment, and all other interactions, by my first name, Doug.
- For this assignment, include a signature line at the bottom. I strongly suggest that you set up a signature line on your Umail account that can be selectively added or excluded for future emails, depending upon your privacy needs.
- Keep your writing style as concise as possible, and check your message for spelling and grammar.

### **Due Date**

See course website schedule for due date.