Guidelines for Writing a Professional E-mail

Remember, for this project, this may be the only way you will communicate with some resources, therefore the following guidelines are even more important than if you were writing to someone you already know or with whom you regularly correspond via e-mail.

- Be brief *and* polite. If your message runs longer than two or three short paragraphs, consider either reducing the message, or providing an attachment. Remember to say "please" and "thank you."
- Always fill in the subject line with a topic that means something to your reader. Such as "Inquiry about Styrofoam cup use" or "Concerns about Lynnhaven River pollution"
- Because emails are automatically given a time and date stamp, you do not need to put this information in the email unless you want to do so.
- Write the e-mail using all the conventions and rules of proper English you would use when writing an essay for English class. This means:
    1. Do not use ALL CAPITALS or all lower-case letters.
    2. As a general rule, PLZ avoid email abbreviations and chat room acronyms. Not everyone knows what these abbreviations mean and they are not appropriate in formal writing.
    3. Use proper spacing and paragraphing.
    4. Use the spell check feature <u>and</u> ask another group member, a teacher, or a parent to read it over before you send it.
    5. Do not include any colors or crazy fonts. Keep it clean and simple.
    6. Do not use emoticons, such as smiley faces.
- Begin the email with a greeting.   Make every effort to find out the name of the person to whom you are writing. Begin with: "Dear Mr. Smith:" or "Good afternoon Ms. Jones:" If you do not know the person's name use his or her title instead: "Dear Store Manager:" or "Dear Purchasing Director:" If you do not know and cannot find out name or title, the appropriate generic greeting is: "Dear Sir or Madam:".
- The first paragraph should be about who you are and why you are sending the email.
- The second paragraph should contain the information you are providing or the request you are making.
- If there are any attachments, mention them in the email so the receiver knows to look for and open the files. Also, appropriately name the attachments so the receiver knows what each document is just by looking at the name.
- Provide a closing statement. Start by thanking the receiver for his or her time. Include an accurate follow-up statement such as, "I will contact you again with further information," or "I look forward to hearing your ideas."
- Add a signature block with appropriate contact information. In most cases, this means your name, school address, and e-mail contact information. Avoid the inclusion of quotes or cute pictures in professional correspondence.
- It is a good idea to type the e-mail in Word first in order to proofread carefully to make sure the text of the e-mail is perfect. This will also prevent you from accidentally sending the e-mail before you are done. Simply copy and paste the message into e-mail when you are done and send.
- Reply promptly to messages you receive in return. You are writing to a business person or community leader who has taken the time to reply to you. Make sure you write back in a timely fashion, showing that their willingness to help you is appreciated.