

The Ten Commandments of Email from David Page, Canadian Hemophilia Society

1. Thou shalt not leave your message untitled lest you wish it to be relegated to the murky limbo of nameless missives. (Name it meaningfully from the perspective of your reader.)
2. Thou shalt not "Reply to all" lest you sincerely wish to unleash a wild flurry of electronic messages. (Imagine if everybody replied to all, all the time. Apply the principle of "need to know".)
3. Thou shalt not reply to one message using "Reply" from a different message from the same correspondent lest you wish your wise words to be lost forever. (Imagine that your correspondent is searching for these wise words in the distant future and is basing his/her search on the title!)
4. Thou shalt not preface your message title simply "Re:" nor shall you use "FW:" nor, sin of all sins, "Re: FW:". (Imagine your correspondent's stupefaction when he comes upon a title such as "Re: FW: Re: FW: Re: FW:".)
5. Thou shalt not expect your correspondent to answer you forthwith. (In the old days, when surface mail really worked, one could expect a local response within 24 hours. That still makes sense. If it is really urgent, call. It is quite likely your correspondent will be very happy to talk to you.)
6. Thou shalt use your electronic mailing lists with extreme caution. Thou shalt remember that your esteemed correspondent is on other people's mailing lists as well and may receive 100 messages a day or more. (Apply the principle of "need to know".)
7. Thou shalt make your e-mail message as clear as a well-written letter from yesteryear.
8. Thou shalt avoid the use of labels such as IMPORTANT, URGENT, HIGH PRIORITY, REALLY INTERESTING. Thou shalt also avoid overuse of capital letters, bold font, underlining and kaleidoscopic colours unless you want your correspondent to think you think he/she can't read very well.
9. Thou shalt indicate what action you expect of your correspondent; for example, "Please reply", "No reply necessary", "For your information".
10. When in doubt, thou shalt keep other people's email addresses confidential. (Use "Blind cc" or "Don't show addresses when sending to group".)