



**MEMBER  
RESOURCES**

## Sending good emails

*It's one of our primary forms of communication and how you use email can make a big difference to its outcomes. Regional Arts Victoria's General Manager Joe Toohey shares his tips for getting the most out of email.*

### Emails vs to-do lists

Many of us use our emails as to-do lists, or to measure how much we will get done today. This often means that we'll send or reply to an email just to get it out of our inbox and off the to-do list – which doesn't do our recipient any favours (particularly if they use their inbox as a to-do list as well).

Emails are communications, just like letters, phone calls, reports, telegraphs or psychic transmission. You need to consider your audience and give whoever you are sending it to the best chance of absorbing and acting on its information.

### One prominent call to action

Most of us get dozens of emails a day. This reduces the amount of information you can absorb from them, particularly in busy or stressful periods.

For group emails in particular, start with your call to action up-front. You can follow this up with background information or instructions if you need to, but don't put the backstory front. Use **bold**, **highlight** or other tools to bring attention to **what you need your recipient to do**.

E.g. Subject line: Provide event images by Friday.

Body text (call to action): **Please submit your images by this Friday.**

Body text (background information): Your images will be used to advertise your event.

### Emails are not essays

Numbers or dot points increase the readability of your email and help people navigate information. Don't write essays: if your email is stretching beyond five paragraphs, consider whether you need to put the information in a separate document for consideration.

Emails are not meetings. Don't try to make group decisions by email; once you get more than one person offering an opinion in a 'reply-all' email trail, it's probably time to call a meeting or pause the conversation until you can meet in person.

### **Delaying delivery of emails**

Don't send someone an email at 5pm on a Friday. The recipient will not have a chance to do anything about it until Monday, so all you are doing is pushing something off your to-do list and onto theirs. If you really want it out of your inbox, use the delay delivery function in Outlook:

1. Open a new email
2. From the tool bar in the email, select "Options"
3. Select "Delay Delivery"
4. Follow the instructions to determine what time you would like your email to be sent

NOTE: Outlook must be connected to the internet for the email to send (i.e. the email won't send while you're on holidays; you must be logged in to Outlook).

### **Tone**

Emails lack the tones that can be detected in speech. People will read more into what you send than what you type, regardless of your intention. If they think you are cranky, they will see cranky. If they think you are a duffer, they will read duffer. For this reason, try not to use emails to deliver difficult or bad news in the first instance. The email might be sent as a follow-up, but always try to phone someone first and let them know the email is coming.