

EMAIL STYLE GUIDE



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The emails that you send to outside audiences, such as prospective students or community partners, are important. Research shows that, in addition to conveying necessary information to your readers, your emails shape the perceptions they have about DePaul.

To help you write emails that will accomplish your goals and enhance the reputation of the university, we've compiled best practices from higher education experts and communication strategists. This *Email Style Guide* also includes excerpts from DePaul's [Editorial Style Guide](#), helping ensure consistent use of style, organization and grammar across all university communications.

Most importantly, this guide will help you avoid common mistakes. By using this guide, your communications will become more effective. Please use it consistently.

There are three sections to this guide:

- Best practices
- Style guidelines
- Text guidelines

For a more thorough list of style and grammar rules, please review the [Editorial Style Guide](#).

If you have any questions or have a suggestion for an addition to the style guide, please contact the director of Marketing Communications.

BEST PRACTICES

Make sure email is the right way to reach your audience

Before committing to an email, determine whether this is the best way to reach your audience. Factors to consider include

- How many emails has your audience already received from you and/or DePaul? High volumes cause some audiences to tune out.
- Do you want your audience to respond electronically? Email may be the appropriate vehicle if you want a return email or a visit to a website.
- Would your communication be better conveyed through another vehicle (i.e., telephone call or postal mail)?

Keep it brief

In general, emails should be brief and include links to more information. People scan email on a variety of devices, so keep paragraphs short and use bullets and headlines to highlight important information and quickly convey key points.

Use a single call to action

The focal point of your email should be the action you want the recipient to take. Make only a single request. If you ask recipients to do several things, they may fail to respond to your primary request.

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BEST PRACTICES

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Be consistent

Refer to programs, events or actions you wish the recipient to take in the same way within each email; if you create multiple emails, you should talk about these concepts in the same way across emails.

Keep subject lines short and clear and include DePaul

Readers often decide whether to open an email based on the subject line. Some things to consider when creating your subject line:

- Keep your subject line straightforward; avoid ambiguity and word plays.
- Limit your subject lines to about 50 characters.
- Use “DePaul University” in the subject line if possible.

Reflect DePaul’s brand

The content of your email should reinforce—and never conflict with—DePaul’s mission and brand. If your email is promotional, you also may want to include any key messages that have been developed for your program.

- Although you do not need to use these exact words, DePaul is known as a **respected institution**, with a strong sense of **social responsibility**, where students acquire **real-world knowledge through engaged learning** that is balanced with the **urban and multicultural experiences** of Chicago.
- Use incentives wisely and sparingly. Research shows that prospective students, particularly teens, often associate free goods and sweepstakes with sub-par products and services. If you use an incentive, make sure it reflects DePaul’s prestige and tie it to the action you want your reader to take.

For more information about the DePaul brand, visit brandresources.depaul.edu.

Avoid jargon

Use the same language your readers would use. Explain terms that are familiar to you but that your readers may be seeing for the first time.

Use spelling- and grammar-check wisely

While spelling- and grammar-check programs can help you spot mistakes, remember that these programs do not know what you are trying to say nor do they follow DePaul style. Review each suggested correction before you accept the change.

Test all emails before sending

Always test your email before a mass mailing. View the email through several different Web browsers (Firefox, Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, etc.) and providers (Outlook, Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, etc.) to make sure there are no formatting errors or unrecognizable characters.

Review email metrics

If your email capabilities allow, review any available metrics that give you a picture of the effectiveness of your emails. This should be completed in the weeks after you send your email (or after the end of an email campaign). Many email and customer relationship management (CRM) systems have the capability to pull basic data on how your audience interacts with your email. Doing so will provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of your emails or campaigns in the future.

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BEST PRACTICES

Review email metrics *continued*

Some of the most common and useful email metrics include

- **Opened messages**, or the number of recipients who open your email. The open rate can be determined by dividing the number of opened messages by the total number of emails sent. Good open rates measure between 10 percent and 25 percent.
- **Click-throughs**, or the number of times a recipient clicks on trackable links within your email. The click-through rate can be determined by dividing the number of click-throughs by the total number of emails sent. Click-through rates generally fall between 1 percent and 10 percent, depending on the nature of your email's message.
- **Unsubscribes**, or the number of recipients who unsubscribe to your email/ mailing list. The unsubscribe rate can be determined by dividing the number of unsubscribes by the total number of emails sent. Unsubscribe rates should be very low—between 0.3 percent and 1 percent per email.
- **Sent messages**, or the number of outbound emails sent with your mailing.
- **Delivered messages**, or the number of emails that actually deliver to your recipients' inboxes.
- **Hard bounces**, or emails that are permanently undeliverable.
- **Soft bounces**, or emails that are temporarily undeliverable.

Source: idealware.org/articles/email_metrics.php

Compliance with the CAN-SPAM Act

Emails that contain messages of a commercial nature must adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN-SPAM) Act. This act gives recipients the right to opt out of any emails that have a primary purpose of distributing commercial content. The law defines commercial content as "any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service."

If your email contains messaging that falls within the category of commercial content, please ensure that it adheres to the guidelines of the CAN-SPAM Act. A full explanation of this act, along with the requirements it sets forth, can be reviewed at business.ftc.gov/documents/bus61-can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business.

STYLE GUIDELINES

Use the DePaul logo and signature on all mass email communication

The DePaul logo is an important part of our brand image. The logo ties your message to all other communications that your audience has received from DePaul. It also tells your readers that your message is legitimate and not SPAM.

Put your key message/offer in the upper-third section of your email

This is the first place email users look, so put the most important information here. If a reader employs a preview panel, they often see nothing beyond the top few inches of an email. Should they choose to ignore the email and your key message/offer is at the bottom, they will never see the call to action you desire them to take.

Use at least a 12-point font

Readers will skip your message if they have to strain to read it. Use a clean, easy-to-read font for your text.

Use color carefully

Choose colors that make your message easy to read. Viewers quickly delete messages that are difficult to scan.

- Make sure your font contrasts with your background color.
- Do not use red or black as a background color.

If red is used, it should be used sparingly and never with blue font (despite being DePaul's school colors, they are very difficult to read in combination).

Do not use graphics for headlines, subheads or body copy when you can use HTML

Graphics are often suppressed by the reader's service provider. Many readers choose not to download images, so they will miss part of your message. Don't turn your entire message into a graphic; if readers do not choose to download your image, they will miss your message completely.

If you do choose to use graphics in your emails, include alternative text for each graphic. Doing so not only improves the accessibility of your email, but also provides an explanation of the graphics if your reader chooses to not download them.

Use the college template for recruitment emails

Marketing Communications has created a number of email templates, which make design easy. If you are sending an email to prospective students at the undergraduate or graduate level, consider using a template. A number of templates are available for university-wide emails as well. If you need a template, contact the director of Marketing Communications.

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STYLE GUIDELINES

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Recommended email signature format

To create consistency across university email communication and to further reinforce a unified, university-wide brand to all the university's external audiences, the following email signature format is recommended (when applicable):

- 1.....Name Surname
- 2.....Title | Department | DePaul University
- 3.....Address | City, State Zip
- 4.....Office Location: Address | City, State Zip
- 5.....Tel: (000) 000-0000 | Fax: (000) 000-0000 | Mobile: (000) 000-0000
- 6.....name@depaul.edu | www.depaul.edu
- 7.....www.web_address_two.edu | www.web_address_three.edu
- 8.....Extra Line Space to Separate Web Addresses and Social Media Icons
- 9.....Social Media Icon(s)

The following chart documents the required fields, font size and color if you choose to use this signature format. Your emails should have a white background and the stationery selector should be set to "none."

Usage	Font	Size	Color
1 Required	Arial Bold	9	Black (Auto)
2 Optional Optional Required	Arial Regular	8	Black (Auto)
3 Required Required	Arial Regular	8	Black (Auto)
4 Optional Optional	Arial Regular	8	Black (Auto)
5 Required Optional Optional	Arial Regular	8	Black (Auto)
6 Optional Optional	Arial Regular	8	Black (Auto) Blue (Auto)
7 Optional Optional	Arial Regular	8	Blue (Auto) Blue (Auto)
8 Optional	N/A	8	N/A
9 Optional	View approved icons at Social Media Guidelines		

Use the approved, email-optimized social media icons, if applicable

You may add social media-related icons to your email (or to your DePaul email signature) if you are linking to a designated DePaul social media site. You may not link icons to your personal social media accounts. Visit the [Social Media Guidelines](#) page on the Brand Resources website to access social media icons that are optimized for use in emails and email signatures.

TEXT GUIDELINES

Like the *Editorial Style Guide*, the email guidelines for text are not intended as a complete guide to grammar, punctuation, capitalization or writing style. Although exceptions are allowed if needed for clarity or accuracy, in most cases you should follow these guidelines. If you have specific questions related to writing style, DePaul uses the following sources, in order of preferred use:

- Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (latest edition)
- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (latest edition)
- The Elements of Style, William Strunk and E.B. White (latest edition)

Acronyms

Do not use an acronym unless you have used it earlier, along with the full term:

School for New Learning (SNL)

Capitalization

DePaul's editorial style follows these capitalization rules:

- Use lowercase letters except when uppercase is clearly required.
- Lowercase the word "university" except if it is part of a proper name:
"DePaul University reserves the right to cancel" and "The university reserves the right to cancel" are both correct.
- Do not capitalize entire words or sentences. Readers consider this equivalent to shouting and it is also more difficult to read.

Commas

Use commas to make sentences more clear, but don't overuse them. DePaul's editorial style is

- Separate items in a series with commas, but do not use a comma before a conjunction or the last item in the series:

DePaul is a Catholic, Vincentian and urban institution.

- Use commas with numbers larger than three digits:

DePaul enrolled 2,400 freshmen last year.

- When a phrase lists only a month and year, do not separate the year with commas:

February 2013 was a cold month.

- However, when a phrase refers to a month, day and year, set off the year with commas:

March 15, 2015, is the target date of the launch.

Dashes vs. hyphens

Dashes and hyphens have distinct uses:

- Use a hyphen to link two words that modify the word that follows them:

on-campus visit

- Use "em" dashes to insert phrases in sentences:

With an "em" dash—you can use two hyphens or select insert/symbols/special characters from the main toolbar—you can add information within a sentence.

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TEXT GUIDELINES

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Degrees

There are several ways to write academic degrees.

This is DePaul's preferred style:

- Capitalize degrees when they are spelled out:
Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, Juris Doctor
- Lowercase the area of study, unless the area is part of the official degree title:
Bachelor of Arts in history, Master of Public Health
- Use abbreviations without periods for degrees and professional designations:
BA, MS, MEd, MSW, MPH, PhD, MBA
- Use an apostrophe if you refer to a "bachelor's degree" or a "master's degree;" do not use an apostrophe when referring to an "associate degree."

Exclamation points

Professional emails use exclamation points sparingly, if at all.

Internet

Be consistent when you use terms related to the Internet.

This is DePaul's editorial style for common words:

- Capitalize "Internet" and "Web."
- "Website" is one word.
- Webmaster, webcast and webcam are each one word, lowercase.

Links

Always include a link if more information is available on the Web. Links in an email should be active (www.depaul.edu vs. www.depaul.edu) and should not include <http://> when written (ex. snl.depaul.edu).

Numbers

Be consistent in the way you write numbers such as dates and phone numbers, particularly if you send a series of emails. DePaul's style is

- Lowercase and spell out numbers and their derivatives from one to nine and use the Arabic form for 10 and above.
- For dates, use ordinal numbers:
June 30, not June 30th
- Use this form for telephone numbers:
(773) 325-6000, (800) 4DePaul
- Use the complete 10-digit telephone number in emails sent outside the university. The five-digit extension (2-6000) is acceptable for internal emails.

Seasons

Lowercase the seasons, even if you are referring to a specific quarter:

- fall, winter, spring quarter 2014
- Fall is preferred to "autumn" for the first quarter of the academic year.

Time

Be consistent with the way you write starting and ending times in emails. DePaul's style is:

- 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Use numbers except for noon and midnight.
- Do not capitalize or leave out the punctuation in a.m. or p.m. Do not use a colon and two zeros for activities that begin at the top of the hour.

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Brand Resources Website

brandresources.depaul.edu

Editorial Style Guide

brandresources.depaul.edu/graphic_standards/writing_guidelines.aspx