

How to get people to respond to your Email requests



1. **Never send your request on a Friday afternoon.** It will get buried over the weekend and on Monday morning with more emails, and they will never get to it. Mid-day on Monday through Wednesday seems to be the best. **[But know your audience – for my researchers between 5-6:30 PM any weekday seems to work.]**
2. **Make your email short and to the point,** with subject line that is descriptive and action-oriented. **[Remember to update and revise the subject line when RE; or FWD:]** These rules are actually pretty good advice for all emails. Whenever possible, try to keep emails to maximum of 3-5 sentences.
3. **Don't use attachments,** if you can avoid it. The more work someone has to do in order to respond to your request, the less likely they are to do it.
4. **Promise that it will only take 60 seconds.** I do this all the time, with little online surveys or forms – I send out an email with the subject line “60-second survey”. For some reason, “60 seconds” is far more effective than “a minute” or “a moment.” This leads me to...
5. **Make an online form, if it is appropriate.** You could create a survey or poll on SurveyMonkey, or a form on Google Docs or **[tools like SmartSheet],** or if you're trying to schedule a meeting or event, try WhenIsGood, Doodle, **[or Meeting Wizard].**
6. **Make it easy.** Do the “hard work” first, and make your request very specific. If you want to send out a press release, write a draft first and include it with your email. If you are compiling information, include a list of what you already have so your recipient can see whether you're missing their info. If you want to schedule a seminar, make a list of available dates and have them choose.
7. **Send out personalized requests.** I've found that you get a much better response when you address the email to each person, rather than sending out a general request to an email list. If you do the latter, most people think that they don't have to do it, or assume someone else will take care of it.
8. **Remind them that you're a real human being and that they should be nice.** It's okay to show some personality, maybe complain a little (JUST a little) if things are frustrating. I've been known to note that certain things make me “sad” or “cranky” in mass emails to the Center, and it always gets a chuckle and a response. But don't overdo it, and don't be cutesy until you've established your reputation as a professional.
9. **Be insistent and demanding.** As a last resort, put “URGENT: Need blah blah blah” in the title, and cc someone that they have to answer to. But really, only do this once you've had to ask several times and haven't gotten a response. Otherwise you'll only piss people off.
10. **[Eliminate the “Justs”.** Do you find yourself qualifying email requests with “Just” (e.g., I just wanted to ask, Just checking in...). It is subtle, but puts you in a defensive position – eliminate the “justs,” and clearly state what you need].
11. **Always respond to THEIR requests in a timely and helpful manner.** Guilt can be a powerful motivator.