

Title:

Email Punctuation Pointers

Word Count:

563

Summary:

When sending email messages, it's easy to get in a hurry. But, remember there's a huge difference between dashing off a note to a friend and sending a message to a customer or colleague.

Keywords:

email, communication, business, marketing, customer service

Article Body:

When sending email messages, it's easy to get in a hurry. But, remember there's a huge difference between dashing off a note to a friend and sending a message to a customer or colleague.

When sending email in a professional environment, the message should be professional. And, that includes using proper punctuation. (Phooey! You were hoping I'd say you could break all the rules, weren't you?)

There is one area of email that gets a little foggy. This is the rule that deals with punctuation at the end of sentences (e.g., periods, question marks, exclamation points).

In typed letters, there are two spaces after the punctuation at the end of the sentence. This originated from typewriters, which needed this space to create a distinct break between two sentences. Computers allot space proportionally. So, a break can be created with only one space.

In emails, you will see two different formats. Some people will use only one space after punctuation that ends a sentence. They will also use only one space after colons. Other people still use the two spaces.

Example

Those who prefer one space consider those who use two spaces to be "old fashioned." Those who prefer two spaces consider those who use one space to "not be conservative or professional enough."

The decision as to whether to use one space or two is entirely up to you. The only rule to follow is that you must be consistent. Either use one space throughout the message or two. Don't mix and match.

You want the message to appear as though you know the rules and made a conscious choice. You don't want the message to look as though you have no idea what the rules are, so you just randomly added spacing.

While you may be able to choose one space or two, you don't get to make choices about other punctuation. All of the other old rules are still in effect.

In case I've whetted your appetite for more information on punctuation rules, here is another tip.

Fanboys

When do you use a comma to separate two thoughts in a sentence, and when don't you? The quick answer is "FANBOYS." This is an acronym which stands for the words:

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

When any of these words connect two independent clauses, you need a comma. That's nice. Now, what in the world is an "independent clause"? It's a phrase that can stand alone. In other words, it has a subject and a verb. It can be a complete sentence all by itself.

For example - The conference call has been cancelled, and it will be re-scheduled next week.

A dependent clause cannot stand alone. It doesn't contain both a subject and a verb. Therefore, it's dependent on the rest of the sentence.

You don't use a comma to connect a dependent clause to an independent clause. To say it more simply, if one of the phrases cannot stand alone (doesn't have a subject and a verb), then you don't need a comma.

For example - The conference call has been cancelled and will be re-scheduled next week.

Whether you're ending a sentence or checking for FANBOYS, take the time to punctuate properly. Your customers and colleagues will respect you for it.