

3.4 E-MAIL

Electronic Mail or e-mail is a system of electronic correspondence by which users send and receive messages over a network of computer and telecommunication links. The messages may consist of short notes and greetings, or extensive (huge) text files plus graphics (drawings) and photographic images, video clips, or sound. Thus, e-mail is an "electronic post office". It provides a "store-and-forward" service. It lets people communicate even in the absence of the receiver at the other end. It means that you can send e-mail message whenever you want. The person to whom you have sent the message, can read the same (after opening his computer) whenever he wants. Thus, the sender and the receiver don't have to connect themselves at the same time to communicate.

For availing e-mail facility, one has to obtain membership with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) such as VSNL, MTNL or Tata Info Service. In addition to internet access, the user also needs a computer, a modem and a telephone line on which he can call the subscription service. He should have his own e-mail address and the recipient's (receiver's) e-mail address for two-way communication.

The elements of e-mail are as follows :

- (i) **the sender** : A person who composes and sends e-mail messages.
- (ii) **the mail agent** : A programme the sender uses to do so; (for regular mail, this might be a pen or typewriter).
- (iii) **the message** : A computer representation of what the sender wanted to say (for regular mail, this would be paper and its envelope).
- (iv) **the mail transport subsystem** : A system that delivers the message (for regular mail, this would be the postal service).
- (v) **the recipient** : A person who receives the mail.
- (vi) **the recipient's mail agent** : It might be a different programme from that of the sender.
- (vii) **the e-mail address** : A text string used to identify senders and recipients; (for regular mail, this would be the text for the address of the locality, city, country and so on).

3.4.1 Sending E-mail

For availing e-mail facility, a person must have an internet connection through the telephone line or cable network. In addition to internet access, he should also have a computer and a modem. He should have his own e-mail address and the receiver's e-mail address for two-way communication. An e-mail address is typically in this form : "username @ location organisation type country"

An individual's e-mail address may be like this: "Sun India, Delhi @usa.net." Sun India is the name of the user based in Delhi, the Internet Service Provider is USA which is a network administration. The symbol "@" is pronounced as "at" The symbol "." is pronounced as "dot." The symbol "-" is pronounced as "underscore".

In sending the e-mail message, the following steps should be taken :

- (i) Start an e-mail message, through any one of the popular packages like Outlook Express, etc. on your computer.
- (ii) Type on the computer keyboard the e-mail address to which you want to send the message.
- (iii) Type the message in the provided place.
- (iv) Type sender's name and his e-mail address.
- (v) Take the mouse pointer at the "Send" button and click the mouse once.

Then, the message is transferred to an SMTP server (Simple Mail Transport Protocol Server) which is a mail server that accepts outgoing e-mail. The POP3 server collects and processes the incoming e-mail. Both these servers are run by the Internet Service Provider (ISP).

It may be noted that the user can send the same message to several receivers by typing in their addresses one after another at the place against the letters "Cc" (carbon copy)—a list of the receivers. If you type the list of receivers against the letters "Bcc" (Blind carbon copy), then the list of the receivers is not visible to the person who receives this message. Further, 'attachments' may be sent with the message. It means that other data files or documents may be attached (enclosed) with the e-mail message.

EXHIBIT 1

Composing of e-mail

The header : It more or less corresponds to the envelope of postal mail. It consists of a sequence of tagged header lines; tags are defined by an Internet and include things like.

To : Denotes to whom the mail is to be sent, *i.e.*, you have to write the recipient's mail address.

CC : CC or carbon copy is used to specify the addresses of all the recipients who will also receive copies of the same mail.

BCC : BCC or Blind carbon copy is used to send messages to several addresses without showing everyone all the addresses.

Subject : Subject of the message as specified by the sender.

Attachment : This link is used to send files, created with other programmes such as MS word or a zip file, alongwith the e-mail.

The body : The main part of the message; a simple text message with zero or more attachments; in fact the attachments are encoded as text via a protocol called MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions)

3.4.2 Reading Incoming E-mail

The user of the Internet service can check his mailbox in his computer to read the incoming e-mail messages in the Inbox folder.

You may choose to reply to a message while you are reading it. Then, click on the "Reply" button.

When you start your mail agent, it usually checks with the mail server to see if any new mail has arrived. When the server reports that there is new mail, the agent typically copies all new messages from the server into the 'incoming messages' or 'inbox' folder and removes them from the server. The agent usually keeps track of which messages you have read and which remain unread. It may give you some way to move messages from your inbox to other folders.

3.4.3 E-mail Abbreviations and Acronyms

In order to keep e-mail messages short, people sometimes use abbreviations for common expressions such as :

A SAP	As soon as possible
A FAIK	As far as I know
BFN	Bye for now
BTW	By the way
BBL	Be back later
FYI	For your information
IAE	In any event
IMO	In my opinion
IOW	In other words
LOL	Laughing out aloud
NBD	No big deal
NRN	No reply necessary
OTOH	On the other hand
WYSIW YG	What you see is what you get.

3.4.4 Popularity of E-mail

Electronic mail or e-mail has gained popularity in modern business organisations. The companies around the world are now using e-mail to enhance their effectiveness. E-mail is fast replacing the telephone and the Fax as the primary mode of communication. Its cost is lower as compared to the size of message and distance of the receiver. Its cost is even much less than that of Fax or Telex. It has a very high speed of travel. It takes only seconds to reach the receiver at any distance in the world. It does not disturb the receiver who might be busy in meetings or otherwise, or even sleeping at night. The receiver can open his e-mail at his convenience and download the messages.

E-mail offers the following advantages :

- (i) It facilitates sending to and receiving messages from others having e-mail addresses.
- (ii) It transmits the message almost instantaneously. Thus, its speed is very fast.
- (iii) It directly reaches the concerned individual's electronic mailbox.

- (iv) It does not require the presence of the receiver of the message at the other end. The message is delivered into his mailbox and can be obtained by the receiver by opening his mailbox.
- (v) It ensures a higher degree of secrecy of the message.
- (vi) It is a very cheap medium of communication. Hard-copy letters and memos can often be replaced.
- (vii) Messages can be sent at any time, day or night, decreasing problems brought about by differences in time zones.
- (viii) Messages can be sent to many people simultaneously.

3.4.5 Limitations of E-mail

Some of the glaring weaknesses of e-mail are as follows :

- (i) E-mail does not guarantee secrecy.
- (ii) E-mail messages may be taken less seriously than traditional business letters.
- (iii) Senders of messages have no assurance that the intended receivers will check mailboxes or respond to messages.
- (iv) Space available on an e-mail screen is less than that of a single-spaced typewritten page. Multiple screens are likely to be more annoying than a long typewritten letter or memorandum would be.
- (v) Messages are not always delivered because the intended receiver's computer system may be down. E-mail users must observe "undeliverable" messages and attempt to resend.
- (vi) Incompatibility of electronic mail systems prevents the sending and receiving of messages between these systems.
- (vii) Senders are more likely to make errors in facts and approach, in addition to errors in logic, grammar, and spelling, because messages are prepared more quickly than most letters and memorandums.
- (viii) The ease with which messages can be sent results in large amounts of junk and unnecessary communication, which wastes time. Spam is the term used in e-mail to denote unnecessary mails that keep coming into one's inbox. Spam is useless for the receivers and it only results in filling up of the mailbox.

3.4.6 Ensuring Smart e-Mail

The following guidelines should be followed to ensure smart and safe e-mail :

1. Ensure Correct e-mail Address : In case of e-mail, there is no postman to make enquiries and deliver the e-mail even when postal index number is wrong. E-mail bounces back even with change of a single digit, letter or a punctuation mark in the address. There is also the possibility that the mail goes to somebody else's mail box. Therefore, double check the spellings before clicking on the receiver's address.

2. Keep Business and Personal e-mail Separate : It is very risky to use the same box for personal and professional mails. Your employer might monitor the

mail in your mail box because he believes that job related mail is company property. Moreover, when you are on leave from the office your mail may remain unanswered. Unless you have a separate box for personal mail, your colleagues might access your personal mail.

3. Manage Your Mail Box : Open your mail box twice a day as speed is essential in e-mail. Scan the mail in the box, reply the urgent one, delete the junk mail. The mail which cannot be replied immediately should be acknowledged so that the sender does not keep sending reminders.

Delete any messages that are no longer required. Use sub-folders for incoming and outgoing mails for future reference. Sub-folders will make it easier to access the stored mail.

4. Do not Put Confidential Information : World Wide Web is a glass house as the mail on it is not fully safe. Hackers can access even heavily guarded networks of banks and governments. Do not ever put sensitive information such as your credit card number as the same could be misused.

5. Invest in the Subject Line : Use brief and precise subject line to tell the reader clearly what the mail is about. Otherwise the receiver might delete your message without reading it. A smart heading attracts attention towards the e-mail message. Example: "Urgent—Computer Breakdown".

6. Keep Your Mail Brief : E-mail message should be like skirts—short enough to be interesting and long enough to cover all the vital points. Reading from the monitor screen is harder and slower than reading a print out of the same text. If the e-mail message is long, it might not be read at all or read too casually.

7. Show a Clear Thought Structure : The ideas should be in a sequence so that the message is easy to understand and accept. The text should be divided into different paragraphs with plenty of space between the paragraphs.

8. Mind Your Tone : Be sensitive to the needs of the reader and your relationship with him. Poor tone may offend the reader and the message may fail to get the expected response.

9. Mind Your Language : Use proper grammar, punctuation and correct spellings to avoid any misunderstanding. If any e-mail message provokes, you might be tempted to pump your anger in your reply. Do not send the reply immediately. Wait for some time and reread your replay before sending it.

3.4.7 E-mail Etiquettes

To be an effective e-mail communicator, the following etiquettes should be observed :

- (i) Respond to e-mail messages in a timely manner.
- (ii) Provide clearly worded subject lines for all messages.
- (iii) Use shorter lines and shorter paragraphs than in regular word processing documents.
- (iv) Be complete and concise and avoid rambling.
- (v) Use upper and lower-case letters. This is easier to read; also, all caps is considered "Shouting", which should be avoided.

- (vi) Use text editors and spell checkers when available.
- (vii) Use jargon carefully—consider background of a reader or readers.
- (viii) Avoid inappropriate and possibly offensive language.
- (ix) Avoid trivial responses; they just clutter the e-mail system.
- (x) Avoid firing angry messages back to the sender (flaming).
- (xi) Avoid sending “junk” mail.
- (xii) Avoid adding too many attachments to your message.
- (xiii) Avoid use of emotions (typewritten symbols such as: - that represent feelings) unless you are absolutely certain your reader will interpret the symbol as you intended.
- (xiv) Always provide a personal name if your mail system allows it – a personal name attached to your address identifies you better than your address can on its own.
- (xv) Always include a subject line in your message. It is often the only clue the recipient has about the contents while filing and searching for messages.
- (xvi) Do not type your message in all uppercase – it is extremely difficult to read (although a short stretch of uppercase may serve to emphasise a point heavily). Try to break your message into logical paragraphs and restrict your sentences to sensible lengths.

EXHIBIT 2

Guidelines for Writing E-mail Message

While writing e-mail message, the following guidelines should be kept in mind :

1. E-mail messages are not private like conversation. They can be checked by other persons. Therefore be careful about e-mail messages.
2. All the principles of good writing like you-attitude, positive emphasis, clarity of the message, considerate attitude, conciseness of the language, completeness of the message, etc. apply to e-mail messages.
3. Use spell check for correct spelling and ensure that the message is grammatically correct.
4. Reread and proofread the message before sending.
5. Do not write when you feel anger. First cool down and then draft the message.
6. Subject lines should be appropriately written.
7. Use full caps only to emphasize a single word or two. Putting the whole message in caps is considered as rude as shouting.
8. Find out how your recipient's system works and adapt your messages to it. Most people would rather get a separate short message on each of several topics, so that the message can be stored in different mail boxes.
9. When you respond to a message, include the essential part of the original message and delete the rest.