Voiceover: Are you ready for the workforce when it comes to email etiquette? Today on the Harbert College OPCD Podcast, a few guidelines for content and clarity in the area of your online communication.

Before we jump into the how-to’s of improving those emails, let’s talk for a second about why this is important. Mr. Timothy Ullmann, of the Office of Professional and Career Development, is here to fill us in on that and as the Director of Professional Development he outlines the importance of a polished online presence.

T. Ullmann: Probably one of the most effective ways of communicating in the business world are through emails. But there is a certain way to do this, because words matter and the way that we use those words matters a lot within business. And failure to use words properly can affect the overall impact of your message.

Voiceover: So let’s start with the basics before moving on.

T. Ullmann: Be sure you spell correctly. Be sure you check your grammar. Make sure you’re not using slang or other terms that would only be understood by your friends but not necessarily a professional colleague.

Voiceover: From there, put the following items on a mental list and don’t hit send till you’ve given them a check!

T. Ullmann: Write a meaningful subject line. That little part up at the top there, put something in there that’s going to help identify what is in the body of your message. Don’t leave it blank, but put something that’s helpful that’ll get noticed and then guide the reader to read it and then respond.

Next, keep the message focused. Don’t do a rambling discourse about some topic. If it’s really that important you probably need to go speak with them in person. But the emails that you send are to be focused; short, one or two paragraphs at the very most and then press on.

Voiceover: Try to avoid attachments, unless you were specifically asked to send one and don’t assume that what you send will go no further than the intended recipient. Be sure that your content is cleared for any unexpected forwarding that may happen. And a tip that may seem simple but could make a big difference.
**T. Ullmann:** Identify yourself clearly. At the bottom of the page there make sure you have your first name, your last name, your job title, the company that you work for and contact information so that people know exactly who you are and who you represent.

**Voiceover:** Don’t leave emails sitting in your inbox for days at a time, especially if the sender is your boss or a client.

**T. Ullmann:** If you need some time to think about that, the information that they’re asking you take a little bit of time to assemble? Well then let them know, respond to the email “thank you for the information, I’m looking into that right now and I will be back to you on Wednesday.”

It’s helpful to also distinguish between formal and informal situations. A formal situation would be that you’re writing to your boss’s boss and so you’d be very respectful, you know the typical “sir” or “ma’am” and then concluded with “respectfully,” you know whatever that might be. Whereas if you have maybe a good relationship with your boss or specifically maybe a co-worker, that might be a little bit more informal. So you can be a little bit more relaxed in that.

**Voiceover:** Being respectful and showing restraint are key points of emphasis with any kind of business correspondence.

**T. Ullmann:** Now all of us have gotten those emails that make us a little upset. The natural response would be that you’re just going to go ahead and just flame something right back to them there. When writing business emails always be courteous - always, always. So be kind and don’t flame. There’s a positive way and a polite way of getting your point across without trying to chew someone out on the other end.

**Voiceover:** And of course, the final tip for today is one you’ve heard many times before but one that can’t be overlooked - always proofread. Most of the items we’ve just discussed can be caught and corrected by giving things a once-over before clicking that send button.

**T. Ullmann:** The bottom line with business emails: you need to give the information needed so the recipient will act on your message. Your business writing can serve as persuasive evidence of your competence, your personality and your management style.

**Voiceover:** That wraps us up for today, but you know the drill if you’ve got questions. The OPCD is located on the first floor in Lowder 101 and we’re here if you need additional info or a little advice. Thanks so much to Mr. Ullmann for talking with us today and we look forward to seeing you here, next time, on the OPCD podcast and till then have a great rest of your week!