

# What does email style convey about the writer's personality? | The Hot Word | Hot & Trending Words Daily Blog at Dictionary.com



Like a first impression, the emails we send allow the recipient to judge us solely based on our choice of tone, punctuation and writing ability. We may come across as educated or illiterate, happy or disgruntled – it's all in the delivery. As a recent study suggests, oftentimes the message you are trying to convey is not what ends up in someone's inbox.

**Communicology**, the study of communication, draws on the principles of **rhetoric**, journalism, sociology, psychology, **anthropology**, and **semiotics** to better understand the vast ways in which we interact with one another. Within this expansive genre is the study of written communication.

The development of **pictographs**, a pictorial sign or symbol, among the Egyptian, Sumerian, and ancient Chinese civilizations led to one of the earliest known forms of written expression – **cuneiform script**.

Like the first pictograph some 5,000 years ago, email as a form of communication will always be a work in progress. "This is something that is so new for humans, and it's a very artificial way to interact when you think about it," noted study researcher Frank McAndrew, of Knox College in Galesburg, Ill.

McAndrew's study examines the identity that can be created and thus interpreted by a person's email style; pointing out that by understanding the types of judgments that we make and the way in which people process information from emails we can become better communicators.

One-hundred-and-sixty undergraduates were asked to read emails that contained small grammatical and stylistic adjustments. In addition, researchers added up to five exclamation points and question marks into the eighty-word text. Participants were asked to judge the emotional tone, decipher the relationship the writer had with the recipient, and guess the writer's gender.

The participants perceived writers whose emails were filled with errors to be **apathetic**, while those who wrote in the **third person** conveyed a sense of formality

— and assumed by participants to be in a superior position. Apparently, the excessive use of question marks denotes anger on the writer's part.

A writer who indulges in the overuse of exclamation points is thought to be feminine or happy.

While the study did not include the use of emoticons, find out [here](#) how those winks and smiley faces are bringing us back to where it all began.

Do these observations align with your own perceptions of email personality? Let us know.

Do you subscribe to a certain email [etiquette](#) and if so, what are some of your your email dos and don'ts? Let us know below.