



# How to actually get an email response from your chronically inundated colleagues

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In 2015, the number of emails sent and received totaled somewhere north of 205 billion—per day. The odds of getting anybody's attention in that communication whirlwind are, well, challenging. But there are a few ways of improving the likelihood that someone will hit "reply."

Email productivity company Boomerang recently released a study that analyzed data from 5.3 million emails to find out what was most likely to garner a response.

If it feels like your emails are seemingly sailing off into the ether, use these insights from the study and experts to increase your chances of getting a response.

## Get to the point

Part of the reason your recipient hasn't answered your email could be that they're buried under a (virtual) pile of messages. Making your email short and to the point can help them focus on a response.

"People are busy and should be able to scan it, figure out what you need and deliver solid answers," Duncan says.

If it needs to be a little longer, break up paragraphs and use bullet points to make it easier to scan.

Overall, the study found that emails containing 75 to 100 words were most likely to receive a response.

## Keep it simple

The study found that emails written at a third-grade reading level had a 53 percent response rate, compared to a 39 percent for emails written at a college reading level. This doesn't mean you should write with the proficiency of a 9-year-old; instead, it's a reminder that it's best to steer clear of flowery and unnecessary language. Avoid fussy formatting, too. "The clearer you are with spacing, bulleted text, bold deadlines and simple verbiage, the easier you'll be understood," says Peggy Duncan, a personal productivity expert in Charlotte, N.C.

## Strike a positive tone

Apathy will get you nowhere. Emails that were slightly to moderately positive or negative received 10 percent to 15 percent more responses than neutral emails. That said, a toxic email full of negative vibes was least likely to get a response.

Since it can be difficult to tell in an email when your tone tips the scale into point-of-no-reply negativity, err on the side of caution by staying positive. A good way to check how your email sounds is to read it out loud, says Dianna Booher, a communications expert and founder of the Colleyville, Texas-based Booher Research Institute, and whose latest book, *What MORE Can I Say? Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It*, looks at ways to