

Happy Emailing Grammar in Your Email Video Transcript

- Knowing emails are an extension of your personal brand, it's worth it to take a little extra time to ensure you're grammatically putting your best foot forward. Here are my top five grammar tips for email. First, use the Oxford comma. This means when you have three or more details in a list, you use a comma before the conjunction. For example, this screen has a pink, purple, and gray circle on it. The second comma before the word and is the Oxford comma. Using it makes it easy for the reader to quickly understand your meaning. Now, if I remove the Oxford comma, the meaning is less clear. This screen has a pink, purple and gray circle on it. This basic example shows how easily information can be clearer with a comma. And there are times when this seemingly tiny comma packs a big punch. In February of 2018, truck drivers won a \$5 million lawsuit over a dispute in the meaning of state law related to overtime pay. The decision boiled down to confusion over the lack of an Oxford comma. Second, write active sentences. In each sentence, readers should be able to picture the subject and the verb. This means I should be able to visualize what's happening and who's doing it. For example, Jamie missed the deadline on this project. In this sentence, the actor and action are clear. Most of business writing is active. But there are a few instances when you may want to use passive voice. For example, you may not want to call out Jamie in your email message. So, in that case, the passive version would read, the deadline on this project was missed. This protects Jamie. Generally speaking, business writing is active. But, strategically use passive voice when it makes sense for your situation. Third, avoid excessive punctuation. An exclamation point should be used for emphasis, but if you use them frequently, it reads like you're yelling. And there's no need to use more than one question mark or exclamation point. Fourth, maintain parallel structure in lists. This means if you start with past tense, everything listed afterwards should be in past tense, or if you start with a verb, like the list I'm describing in this video, every item on your list should start with a verb. Finally, keep it simple. Never use 25 words when 15 will do. If you can cut the clutter in your sentences, your readers will have a clear idea of what you want them to understand.