

Best Practices for Communicating with Reed Professors

[*written by actual Reed Professors*]

How to write an email to a professor

- Include a short informative subject (never leave the subject line blank).
- Always include a greeting and closing, e.g. “Hi Julie,” ...blah, blah, blah... “Thanks, Megan”.
- First names are the norm at Reed, but pay attention to how your Profs sign their reply.
- If first contact, err on the formal side, e.g. “Dear Professor Smith”... “Sincerely, Sam Jones”.
- Keep emails brief and to the point... *but*, use complete words and sentences... this isn’t twitter.
- No need to flaunt your vocabulary.
- Edit your emails before sending and try to read them “from the recipient’s perspective”.
- If you find yourself writing an emotional email to a professor, write it, save it as a draft, sleep on it and re-read and revise the next day. (hint: this may also apply to *any* email you are tempted to send between 1:00-5:00am)

What to do *before* asking professors questions

- Read the syllabus carefully.
- Read instructions for assignments carefully.
- Do the assigned readings before class.
- Go to every class and let your Prof know if you will be absent *beforehand*.

How to attain feedback in light of no grades

- Carefully read the feedback on your written assignments.
- If you really aren’t sure how to interpret this feedback, it’s ok to email or set-up a meeting with your professor.
- Try to take a broad view about grades and don’t get hung up on minor details such as the difference between a B and a B+ (don’t worry, a few points will not affect whether you get into med school).

How to get to know professors outside of class

- Stop by our scheduled office hours. This is why we all hold office hours!
- Stay after class for a few minutes to chat.
- Email us and set-up a meeting.
- Don’t ever feel like you are a “bother”.
- Volunteer to work with us outside of class!

How to maintain positive relationships with professors

- Check your Reed Email! This is our primary means of communicating with you.
- Don’t expect us to be at your beck and call.
- Appreciate individual variability.
- Be professional and courteous.

What professors want to know about students

- How do you work best and what are your challenges?
- What are your other interests/talents besides academics?

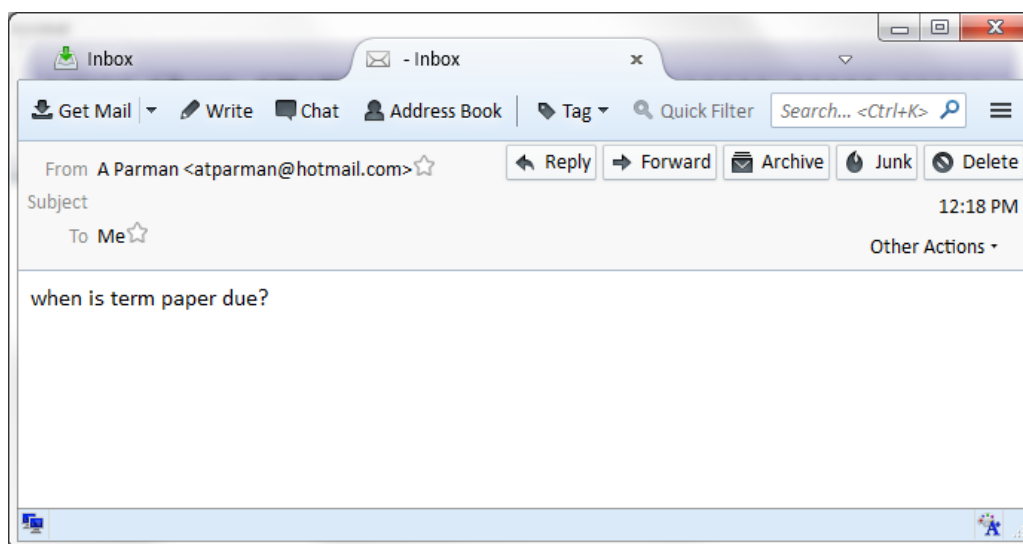
What do professors do besides teach?

(*this list pertains to professors in the sciences, but those in the humanities do similar work)

- Conduct laboratory research
- Write journal articles, books, reviews, etc.
- Referee papers for journals (hence, “peer reviewed” articles)
- Write grant proposals, revise grant proposals, submit multiple grant proposals
- Serve as editors for journals/books, reviewers for granting agencies, etc.
- Collaborate with researchers at other universities
- Serve on committees at Reed and within the wider community
- Organize/Present/Attend scientific conferences
- Write letters of recommendation for students applying for fellowships, scholarships, jobs, graduate school
- Serve as academic advisors for 20+ students each
- Maintain some degree of a work/life balance (we have family, friends, and personal interests too!)

Email

Example 1:



Email

Example 2:

