

POLICY & GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

1.9

Introduction

1. Email is a fast convenient form of communication, but can very easily be poorly used - or misused. Speed of communication does not necessarily ensure quality of, or efficiency in, decision-making. Further, while information can be quickly, efficiently and effectively shared with a wide number of people, so too can misinformation.
2. It is appropriate that OA adopt a policy and guidelines for the use of email to ensure it is used appropriately, efficiently and professionally, and thereby limit liability risks and improve the overall effectiveness of communication within the organisation.
3. This policy specifies email procedures for use within Orienteering Australia to ensure that email communications are effective and reflects a professional approach.
4. A set of recommended email protocols is at Appendix 1.

General

5. An email is a written document that comes under the same legal and ethical standards of all written and published material and is therefore subject to the same legal standards. Laws and policies relating to libel, harassment and privacy apply to email communications. Gender-neutral language should be used.
6. Orienteering Australia relies on external email systems for its email correspondence. Consequently it must be acknowledged that there is no uniform email program (nor supporting word processing programs) common to all correspondents. It is probable that many email correspondents are required to adhere to email policies of the institutions and businesses through which they are able to access email.

Communicating *with* OA Officers, Board and Council

7. Correspondence by email is deemed to be an official means of communication with and within Orienteering Australia.
8. All emails sent to any officer of Orienteering Australia (Board member, Council member, contract officer, other appointees) are expected to adhere to this policy.
9. Any item of business to be referred to OA may be forwarded to the appropriate officer by email either within the email or as an attachment providing the business contained does not require a formal signature.
10. Any item of business referred to OA must be sent to an appropriate and specific addressee, ie. the Director (Administration), the President or other officer (depending on the nature of the business) – as with normal written correspondence.
11. Any email that is deemed inappropriate or offensive should be returned to the sender.
12. The writer of any email received by any Officer of OA that is considered to contain libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks shall be referred to the OA Board for possible action under the Misconduct clause of the Constitution.

Communicating *within* OA: Decision-Making by Email:

13. To facilitate decision making through email correspondence, a two-part process shall be used, a discussion phase and the decision-making stage:

Discussion phase:

14. It must be ensured that all information is circulated to all Board members with a clear indication that the matter will require resolution / decision-making and specifying a date by which discussion must be concluded.

15. It is recommended that for complex issues the discussion should be directed through one member of the Board ie. *Reply to All* should NOT be used. Rather, any response should be to the sole sender who should then summarise responses and promulgate them (if necessary) for further discussion.

Decision-making stage:

16. Any matter requiring a formal decision or resolution of the Board shall be circulated to each Board member by the ~~Director (Administration)~~Executive Officer with a specified date by which each member of the Board shall signify his or her support or dissent with regard to the issue.

17. Any Board Member not contributing a response before the specified date shall be deemed not to have voted on the matter.

18. The ~~Director (Administration)~~Executive Officer shall convey the outcome of the vote to all members of the Board

19. All e-mail decisions are noted at the next meeting of the Board and included in the minutes of that meeting.

Disclaimer

20. Anyone communicating by email as an officer of OA should include a disclaimer such as the following, especially the first paragraph.

Note: it is possible that some correspondents are already required to carry a disclaimer under a workplace or professional policy. That disclaimer must take precedence over one for Orienteering Australia.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE AND DISCLAIMER

This email message and any accompanying attachments may contain information that is confidential and is subject to legal privilege. If you have received this message in error, please do not read, use, disseminate, distribute or copy this message or attachments. Please notify the sender immediately and delete this message.

Any views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, except where the sender expressly, and with authority, states them to be the views of Orienteering Australia. Before opening any attachments, please check them for viruses and defects. Orienteering Australia does not accept liability for the consequences of any computer viruses that may be transmitted with this email.

This email is also subject to copyright. No part of it should be reproduced, adapted or transmitted without the written consent of the copyright owner.

Adopted
April ~~2004~~2008

Recommended Protocols for Email Communications

These guidelines have been compiled from a variety of sources.

1. Some General Points for Noting

- Reading an email on screen is harder than reading printed communications. A benefit of email is its potential to save on paper usage, therefore emails should be written and formatted to encourage on-screen reading and minimise the need to print off copies.
- The person/s to whom email is being sent may not have the same computer facilities (programs, set-up, etc.) as the sender and therefore the email might appear in a different format, and attachments might not be able to be opened.
- Email is meant to be a quick medium for communication and requires a different kind of writing than letters while maintaining professional standards of communication.
- Email communication is highly prone to virus attacks. It is the responsibility of all email users to ensure that they have adequate and up to date virus protection software.
- Email communication is very rapid and there is a general expectation that responses will be prompt. However, haste should never take precedence over the need to give a well-considered response.

2. Style and Format

- Do not make an email longer than it needs to be - be concise and to the point and avoid long sentences (eg. a maximum of 15-20 words).
- Use short paragraphs separated by blank lines.
- When making a number of points it helps to number/identify them clearly.
- Use appropriate structure & layout, especially when presenting what would be a formal business "letter".
- Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation and avoid unfamiliar (or SMS type) abbreviations.
- Take care with layout and formatting. Emails can be written in plain text, rich text or HTML format (depending on the program and settings being used) but not all formats might be able to be received by the addressee.
- Use the spell check before sending an email and re-read it to ensure that it avoids misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.
- Do not request delivery receipts as a routine – these should be unnecessary if the email has been clearly written and invites a considered response. Further, the function could be blocked by the recipient, or their software might not support it.

3. Content

- When writing (or replying to) an email, ensure that all issues are properly covered to avoid an unnecessary exchange of emails to clarify points.
- Do not send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks (or jokes).
- Where possible avoid using email to discuss confidential information – email is not necessarily secure.

4. Subject Heading

- Use a subject heading that is meaningful to the recipient.
- Only use words such as URGENT and IMPORTANT in the subject line when it is highly appropriate to do so. It is better to use the high priority option (again only when essential).

5. Attachments

- Do not attach unnecessary files. Remember the recipient might not be able to open them (depending on program files). It might be more appropriate to include the file content in the body of the email.

- Large attachments can be slow to download and can cause problems for some email systems. Wherever possible try to compress attachments but be aware that the recipient might not have the software to unzip the compressed file.

6. Disclaimers

- Adding a disclaimer to emails can help protect an organisation from liability (eg. a disclaimer at the bottom of every email, saying that the recipient must check each email for viruses and that it cannot be held liable for any transmitted viruses, or that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the organisation, etc.)

7. Addressing email

- **TO:** This is the person/s to whom the email is to be sent (and from whom a response may be requested).
- **CC (carbon copy):** This is used to inform others of the correspondence even though they are not the primary person/s the message was intended for. Using cc is signalling “for information only” and any CC recipient is not expected to reply. CC should be used sparingly – ie. information should be shared strictly on a “needs to know” basis.
- **BBC (blind carbon copy):** Addresses entered in this address box are not revealed to other (TO and CC) recipients. It is appropriately used for sending emails to mailing lists and ensures that names and addresses are kept secure. It might sometimes be used when the writer wishes to send a copy of correspondence in confidence to a third party, but the circumstances and ethics of such use should be carefully assessed before using it in this way.
- The sending of an email to **multiple addresses** is appropriate for the dissemination of information, however it is not necessarily the best option for eliciting decisions and should be used with care.

8. Replies

- There is an expectation that emails will be answered quickly. However, it is better to defer a response to a complicated or emotive issue. Replies written in haste can lead to misunderstandings.
- If the email is complicated or emotive, it might be appropriate to reply saying that the email has been received and a full response will follow later.
- When replying to an email, it is useful to include the original mail in the reply (ie. use 'Reply', instead of 'Create' or 'New Mail'). However, avoid reproducing an excessively long chain of emails. The purpose is to assist the reader to tune in to the issue. In most instances only the most recent email should be included and previous emails deleted.
- 'Reply to All' should be used with care and only if there is a clear need for the message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

9. Forwarding

- Do not copy a message or attachment without permission. Not to do so risks infringing privacy agreements or copyright laws.
- Don't forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.
- Sending or even just forwarding one libellous, or offensive remark in an email can have legal consequences.
- Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.

10. Spam

- Spam emails should not be opened, but deleted (or email software used to block or remove automatically)
- Replying (or unsubscribing) to spam, can confirm that an email address is 'live' and is likely to generate more spam.