

* From “Counselor’s Canvas” newsletter published by the Washington University in St. Louis

Electronic communication and social networking Web sites are becoming a normal part of students’ everyday communications (E-mail, Blogging, Facebook, My Space...). E-mail is often the preferred way to get in touch with colleges and universities. The nature of Internet communication is informal compared to standard business mail, but when is informal too informal? Here are a few “do’s” and “don’ts” to help your students with their electronic communication.

Do:

- Remember that your e-mail messages may be added to your admissions file.
- Choose an appropriate e-mail address. You may want to rethink addresses like partygirl@gmail.com or hatetostudy@yahoo.com.
- Give your full name, address, phone number, and high school on each message.
- Spell check your e-mail, and use proper punctuation.
- Use salutations, e.g., Dear Admissions Officer.
- Be as polite and respectful in an e-mail as you would in a face-to-face meeting or telephone conversation.
- Use the “reply with history” function to help schools remember the questions you asked in previous e-mails.
- Before sending an e-mail with a lot of questions, check the school’s Web site and publications for answers. If you still have specific questions, it is better to call schools so their admissions staff can have a conversation with you.
- Monitor what is posted on your social networking Web sites (e.g. Facebook, My Space, blogs) to ensure that photos and documents are appropriate and respectful. Although Admissions Officers may not specifically check student profiles or blogs, it is best to follow these guidelines given the open and accessible nature of the internet.

Don’t:

- Don’t use all lowercase or all uppercase letters in an e-mail. Lowercase is difficult to read, and uppercase feels as if you are SHOUTING.
- Don’t use “IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!” or “Please read” as subjects for your e-mail. These are commonly used for “junk e-mail” or viruses.
- Don’t send blanket e-mails to a lot of schools at once. Do some research and then ask specific questions, indicating your genuine interest.
- Don’t ‘friend’ an Admissions Officer or your student interviewer on social networking Web sites. It is in your best interest to keep your communications professional during the admissions process.
- Don’t post inappropriate or offensive messages about any university on any Web site (e.g., collegeconfidential.com).