HOW TO WRITE A FORMAL EMAIL
(that does not make the recipient uncomfortable ☺)

1
Use a short and accurate subject header.
Use the subject line to summarize the point of the message so the reader is clear about the content.

Avoid saying too much in the subject header, but make sure it reflects the content of your Email to a person unfamiliar to you. If possible, include a keyword that will make the Email content easier to remember and/or search for in a crowded inbox. For example, "Meeting on March 12th" is specific enough that the email topic won't be mistaken for anything else but not so specific as to be distracting (ex. "Schedule, Guest List, Lunch Requests, and Meeting Overview for March 12th").

2
Use a proper salutation.

Addressing the recipient by name is preferred. Use the person's title (Mr. Mrs. Ms. or Dr.) with their last name, followed by a comma or a colon. Optionally, you can precede the salutation with "Dear..." (but "Hello..." is acceptable as well, followed by a title and name, of course). Using a last name is more formal and should be used unless you are on first-name terms with the recipient. If you don't know the name of the person you're writing to (but you really should try and find one) use "Dear Sir/Madam" or "Dear Sir or Madam" followed by a colon.

3
Introduce yourself in the first paragraph (if necessary). Also include why you're writing,
and how you found that person's Email address, or the opportunity you're writing about. Ex.

- *My name is Earl Rivers. I'm contacting you to apply for the administrative assistant position listed on CareerXYZ.com.*
- *My name is Arlene Rivers. I am writing about the traffic citation I received on December 31, 2009. I obtained your Email address from the Westchester County Clerk website.*

- *I am writing to complain about the poor service provided by your train company.*
- *I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with/at...*
- *I am writing in response to your ...*
- *Following our phone conversation yesterday I am...*

4
Write the actual message. Keep it short and to the point.

Be sure to get your point across without rambling. Try to break up the message into paragraphs by topic to make your message more logical and digestible.

- The email should be no more than 5 paragraphs long and each paragraph should be no more than 5 sentences long.

    Par. 1:   explain why you are writing (see above)

    Par. 2:   explain the situation, give details, and describe any action you might have already taken

    Par. 3:   say what the implications are (i.e. inconvenience it has caused you, the steps that need to be taken, the procedure you have decided on

    Par. 4:   add anything that is necessary, mention attachments...

    Par. 5:   State what you want the other party to do, what you expect from them **(while being polite all the time!)**

- Insert a line break between each paragraph; indenting isn't necessary and will likely be lost during the email transfer anyway.
- Be sure to **avoid informal writing**.

5
Use the correct form of leave-taking.

This will depend on your level of intimacy with the recipient. Examples include:

- *Yours sincerely,*
- *Yours cordially,*
- *Respectfully,*
- *Best regards,*

6
Sign with your full name.

If you have a job title, include that in the line after your name, and write the company name or website in the line after that. If you do not have a job title but you have your own blog or website related to the content of the e-mail, include a link to that below your name. If the e-mail is about a job, only include a career-related website or blog, not hobbies or interests.

7
Proofread your message for content.

Make sure you haven't omitted any important details (or repeated yourself). Reading your email aloud or asking someone to proofread it is a great way to get a different perspective on what you've written. If you cannot do that, try to read it yourself from the point of view of the reader. Is everything clear? Is it polite?

8
Proofread your message for spelling and grammar.

If your email provider doesn't already provide spelling and grammar options for you, copy and paste your email into a word processor, revise it if necessary, and copy and paste it back into your email.