

Group work communication

IF you're working on a group project, you'll probably be exchanging a few e-mail messages. Here are some tips on keeping such communications simple and effective.

Decide on a plan: When you set up the job, work out who's going to do what, and set deadlines. Write these down and confirm them. After this, discuss how you'll communicate. One way is to set up a bulletin board (a private Facebook group can work) where you all share. Agree on how often everyone has to check this.

Watch who you CC: If you're working in a small group, and it's a short project, you can CC everyone on everything. However, this can snowball really quickly.

You can limit the e-mail chat by choosing carefully who you CC. You may choose to e-mail one person 10 times over an issue, and then issue one group

e-mail when it's completed.

Use white space: If a message has three bits of information in it, write each one in a sentence, and leave a blank line between them. This makes it easier to see, easier to read and easier to remember.

Edit replies: When you reply to a message, don't write your message on top and expect people to whiz through it to connect the dots; instead, respond to each point inside the e-mail. This allows people to see the discussion in a threaded way.

Also, cut out stuff you don't need so the e-mail doesn't rival a full-grown python for length.

Split topics: When one e-mail deals with three topics, and then grows in length, feel free to break it up into three separate e-mail messages, each devoted to one discussion only.

This makes things more manageable – and you might be able to cut down in CCs too.