

## Before You Press Send! How to Avoid Email Pitfalls and Faux Pas



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*Presentation slides are available now! The edited recording will be made available as soon as possible.*

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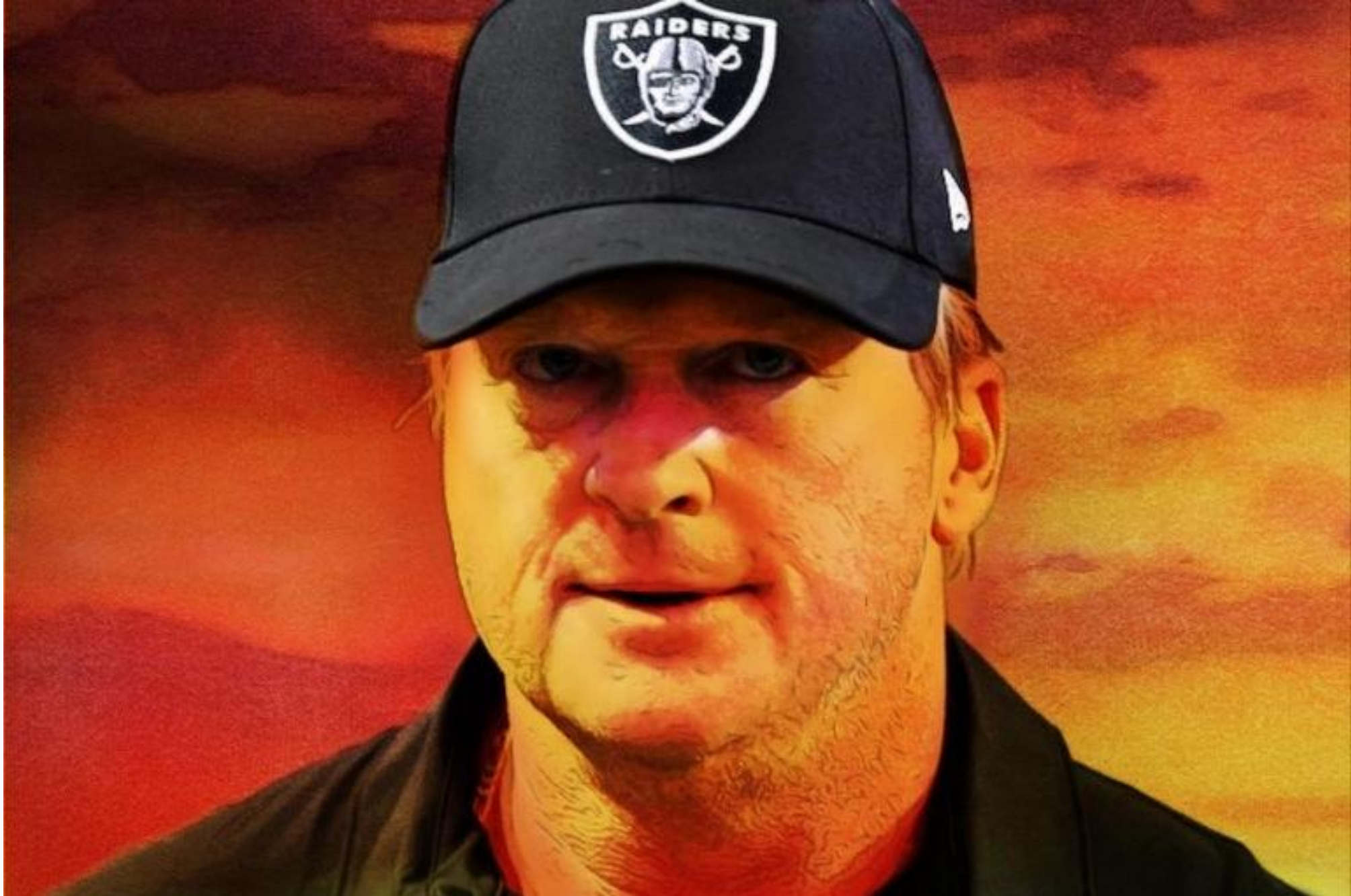
# MJPhD

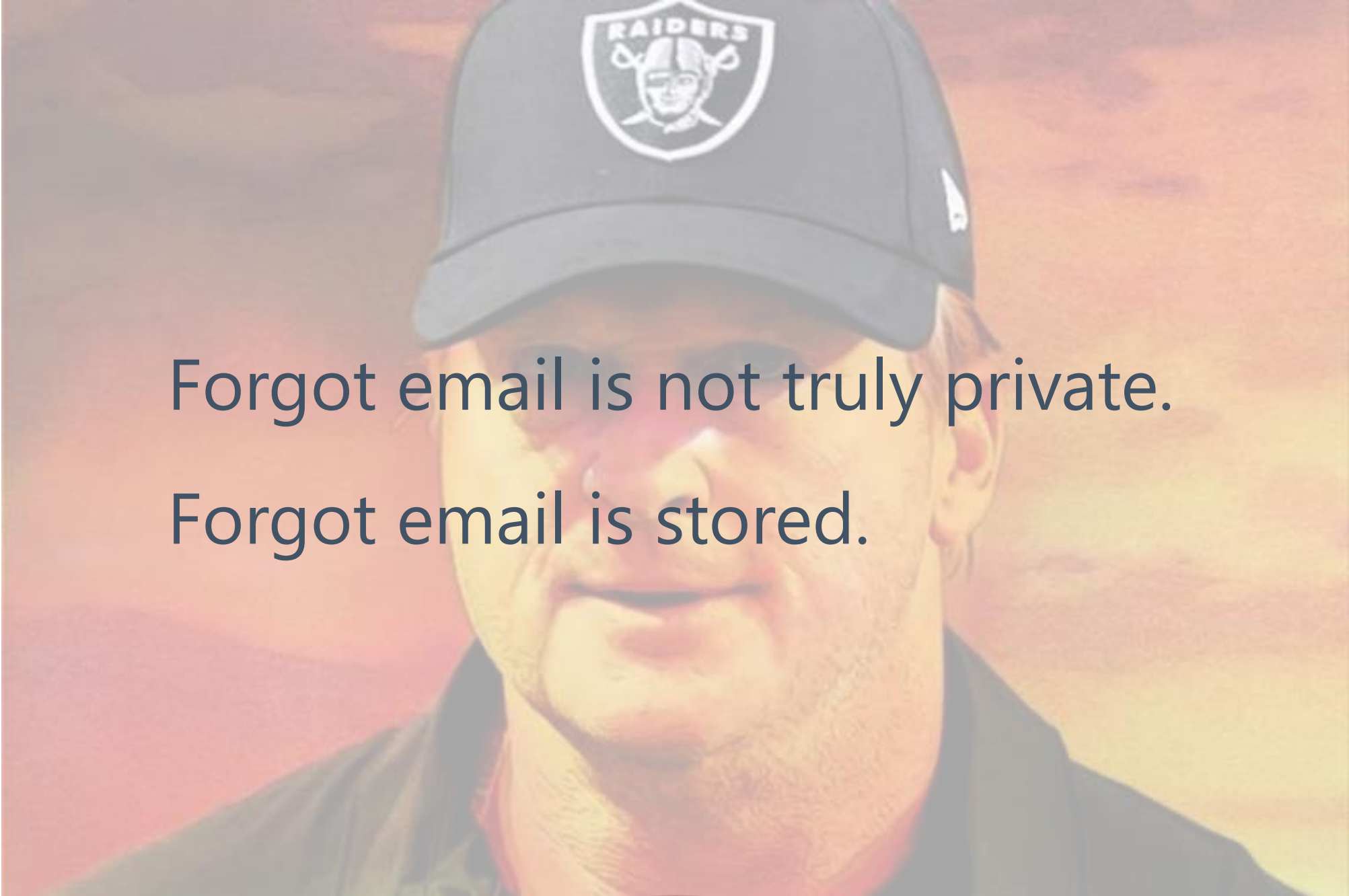
## **BEFORE YOU PRESS SEND!** **HOW TO AVOID EMAIL PITFALLS AND FAUX PAS**

MARK JONES

*26 January 2022*







Forgot email is not truly private.

Forgot email is stored.



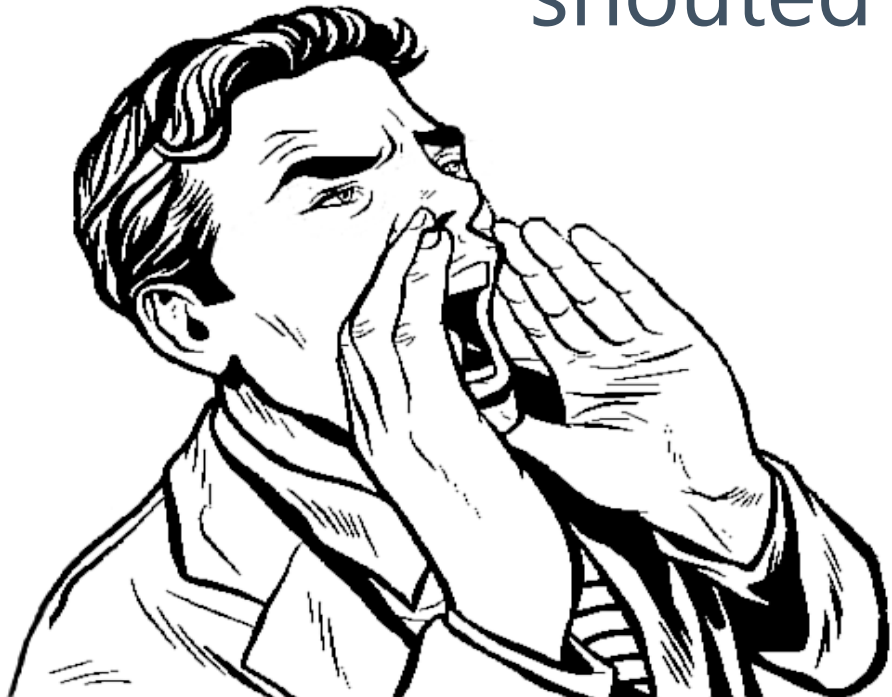
Don't say anything about someone in email you would not be comfortable saying to them directly, because eventually *they* will read it.

Kevin Kelly in *68 Rules*





Assume the contents of any email will be shouted for all to hear.







- Informal
- Impermanent
- Confidential
- Clear who you're communicating with
- You know if you're being heard





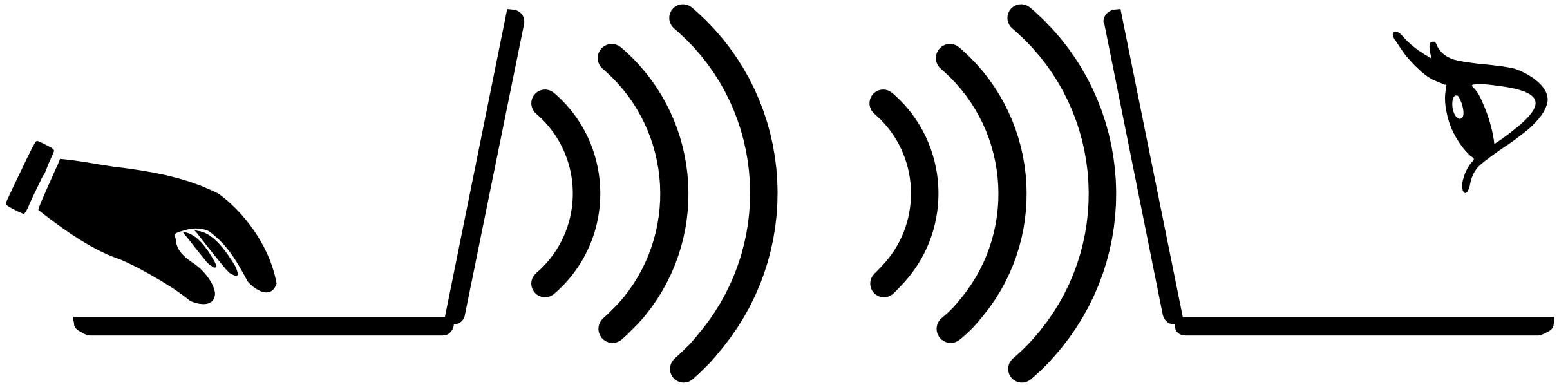
*oldest writing: 5000 years old  
oldest letter: 3400 years old*



- Asynchronous
- Permanent
- You don't truly know who's read it
- You have to wait to know if the message is received
- Subject to over- or mis-analysis
- Copies can be made



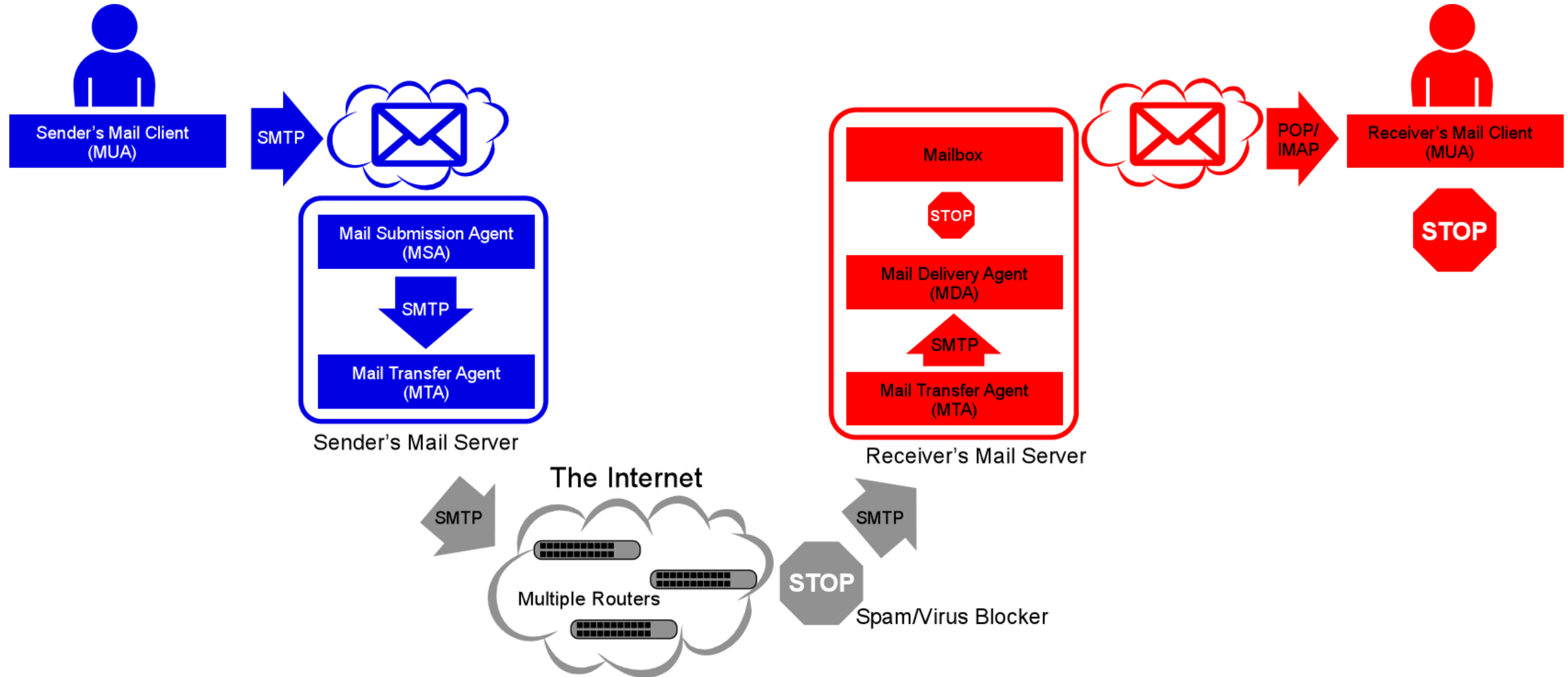
*email invented by Ray Tomlinson in 1971*



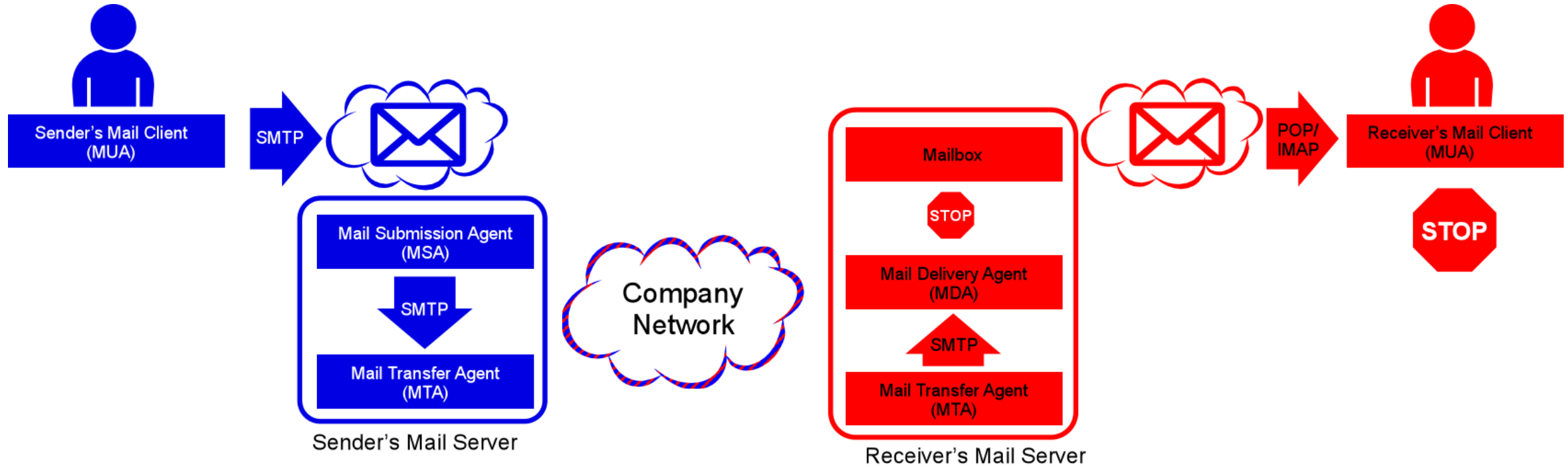


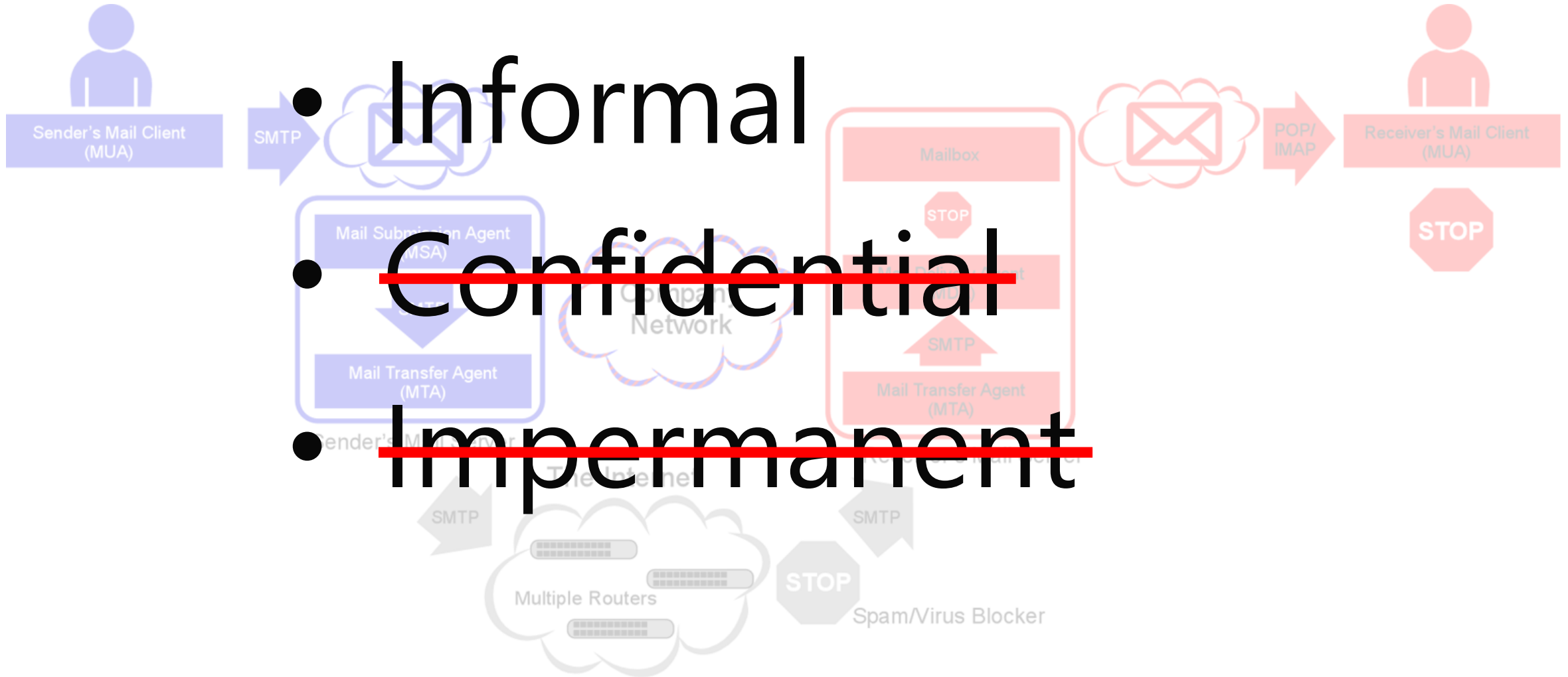
- Asynchronous (with the illusion of synchronous)
- Permanent (with the illusion of being transient)
- Don't truly know who's read it
- You have to wait to know if the message is received
- Subject to over- or mis-analysis
- Copies can be made and widely distributed

# HOW EMAIL WORKS (SIMPLIFIED)



# HOW EMAIL WORKS (SIMPLIFIED)





- Informal
- ~~Confidential~~
- ~~Impermanent~~



## Audience Challenge Answer



**There are 4.26 billion email accounts globally. How many emails are sent?**

- 51.1 billion per day (12 per email account)
- 333.2 billion per day (78 per email account)
- 536.5 billion per day (126 per email account)
- 1.090 trillion per day (256 per email account)

*US average*

*source: Radicati Group, 2021*

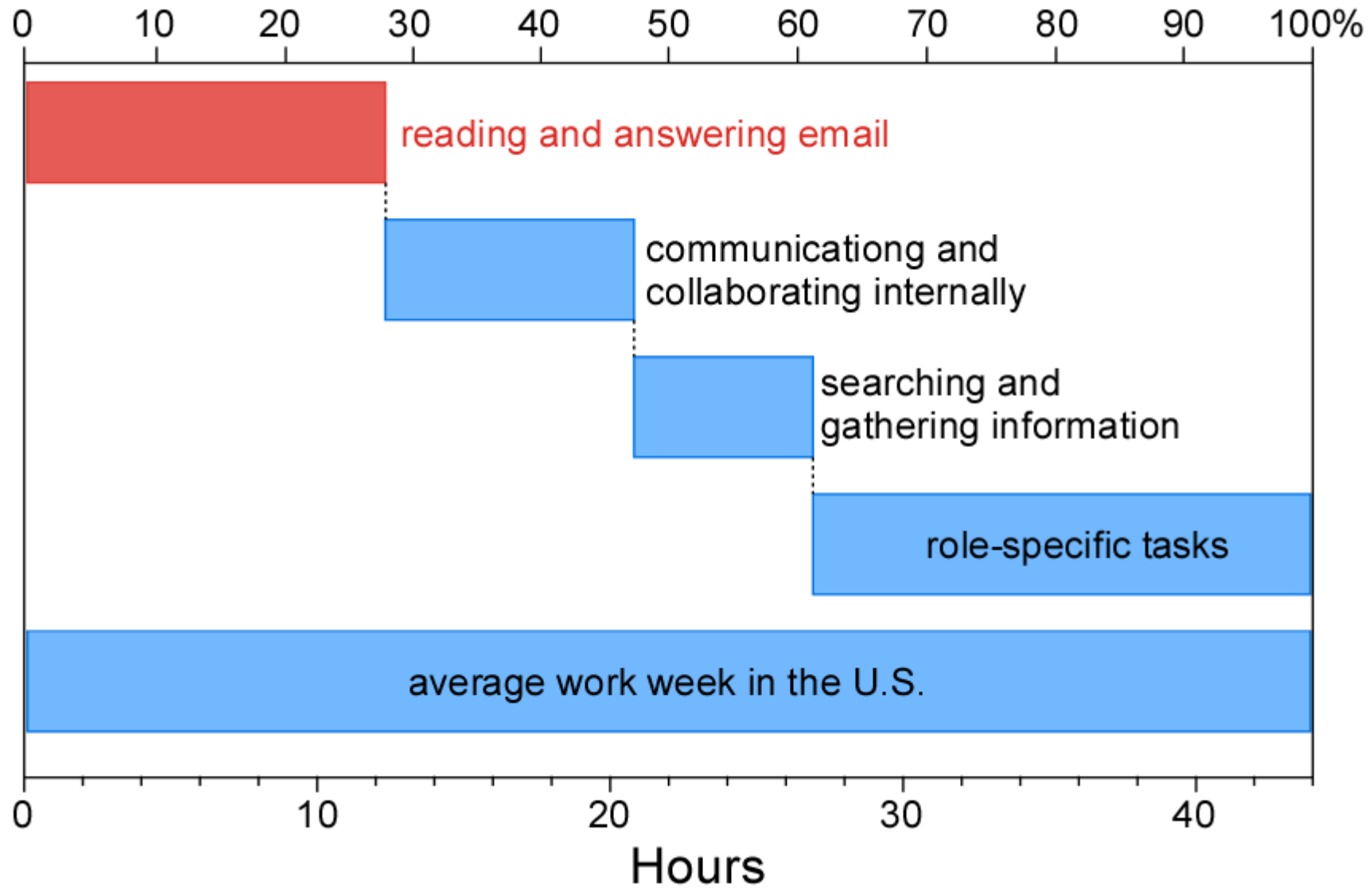
*source: Radicati Group, 2019*



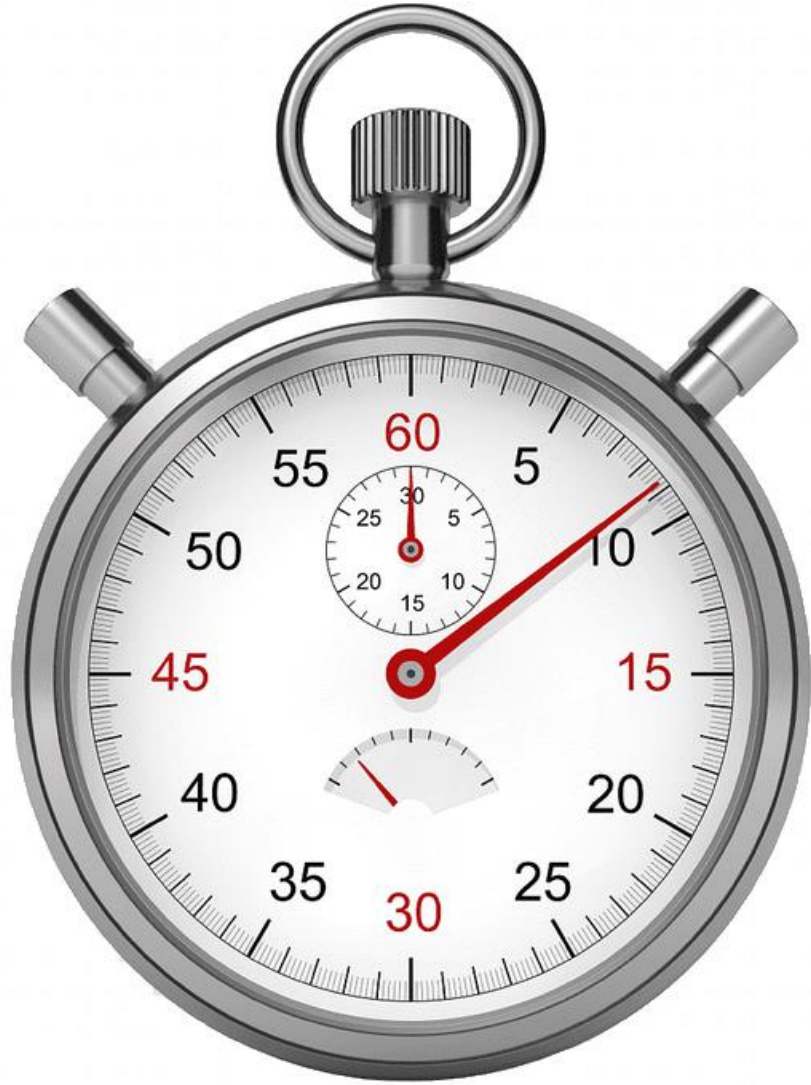


Tools  
Tactics  
Strategy  
Audience  
Goal

# TIME SPENT ON EMAIL



# EMAIL READING TIME



- ~ 1 minute from 147 daily emails taking 2.5 hours to read (Boomerang analysis)
- 13.4 seconds is the average reported by Litmus
- average attention span dropped to only 8.5 seconds (Microsoft 2015 study)



- Studies say over 40% of emails read on portable devices
  - limited screen real estate
  - limited power to open attachments
- Too much!
  - 76% check email on vacation
  - 24% say they check email too much
  - 40% have tried to email detox



- Cheap
- Easy
- Always accessible
- Asynchronous
- Able to cover long distances instantly
  - nearly synchronous
- It can carry payloads

# EMAIL'S FLAWS



- You can't assume only the reader will see it.
- You can't assume all of any message will be read.
  - Spam filters aren't reliable.
  - Too much email!
- Over-analysis is possible, even likely.
- Autocorrect and spelling checkers.
  - Madan → Madman
  - attempt at *inconsistency* → *incontinence*

# CONTROLLABLE PARTS OF AN EMAIL

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- Subject
- Body
- Recipients
- Enclosures
- Your Address



# EFFECTIVE EMAIL: WHAT YOU WRITE

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- Make the subject line helpful.
- Carefully consider recipients.
- Include a greeting to signal the recipient.
- Immediately state why you sent the email and what, if any action, it requests.
- Write clearly. Write well.
- Be professional at all times.
- Proofread.
- If it is important, pause before you send.





## SAMPLE EMAIL

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Subject: Decision needed on E2V project

Dear Charlie,

A yes/no decision from you is needed on whether funds will be allocated for the plant trial for E2V. Please indicate whether you support spending the \$125k.

The detailed budget is enclosed should you want to review. We winnowed the budget to the bare minimum. I do not believe we can reduce any further.

I hope your trip went well. I am sorry we were unable to discuss this matter and this is likely unexpected on your first day back. We are in a holding pattern until your decision.

Regards,

Mark



It is my ambition to say in ten sentences what others say in a whole book.

*Friedrich Nietzsche*





So the writer who breeds more words than he needs, is making a chore for the reader who reads.

*Dr. Seuss*



# WHEN NOT TO USE EMAIL

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- Message/Information is Complicated
- Avoid Email When the Message is Time Sensitive
- Avoid Email When the Message is Sensitive or Emotional in Nature



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2019/03/13/3-times-when-you-really-shouldnt-email/?sh=363eded91405>



*The Rightful Heir*

Harry Bliss, appearing in the New Yorker, September 14, 2015

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- Carefully consider and check all recipients
  - lots of email is incorrectly addressed
- Distribution lists require special care
  - selecting the wrong list exponentiates mistakes
- Recipients forward
  - consider all content when deciding whether to forward
  - nothing says you need to send the entire message
- Recipients add names
  - check names when replying



- Best when professional
- Funny addresses may send the wrong message
  - 2hot4you@website.com
  - kickme@website.com
- Free services come with hidden costs





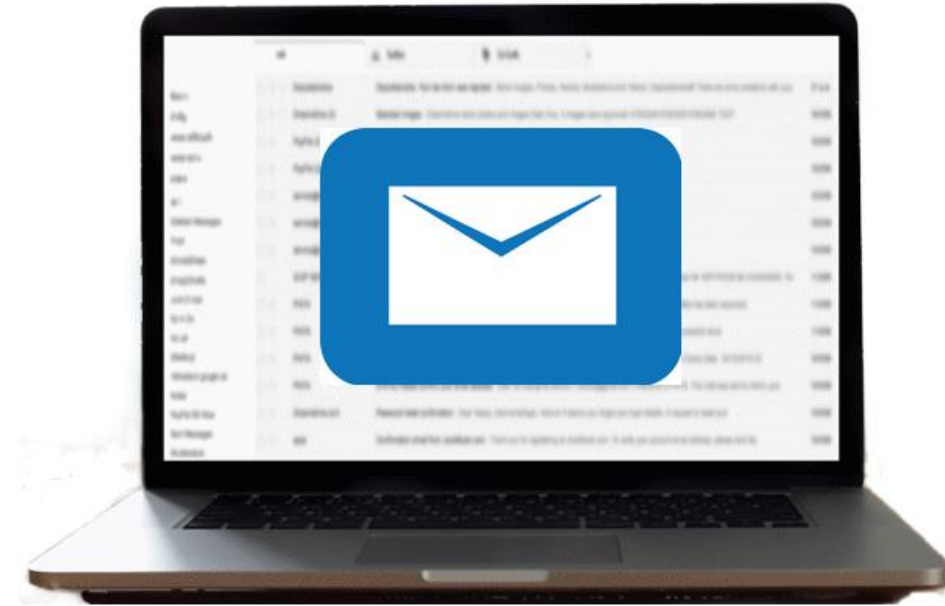


# THREE THINGS ABOUT EMAIL ILLUSTRATED BY THE TRIAL

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- Private emails can be *incredibly* embarrassing
- Emails are discoverable and can be used at trial
  - United States v. Microsoft, 1998
- Companies monitor employee emails





*emphasis mine*

“ Accompanying the increasingly pervasive use of e-mail is the common misperception that email is informal, confidential and not permanent. To the contrary, email may be obtained, examined, and saved by parties unknown to the sender and forwarded to the world via the Internet. Moreover, email has greater potential for permanence than most other forms of communications, as both senders and recipients are able to save the messages on disk, tape, or hard copy. ”

Samuel A. Thumma and Darrel S. Jackson, *The History of Electronic Mail in Litigation*, 16 Santa Clara High Tech. L.J. 1 (2000).

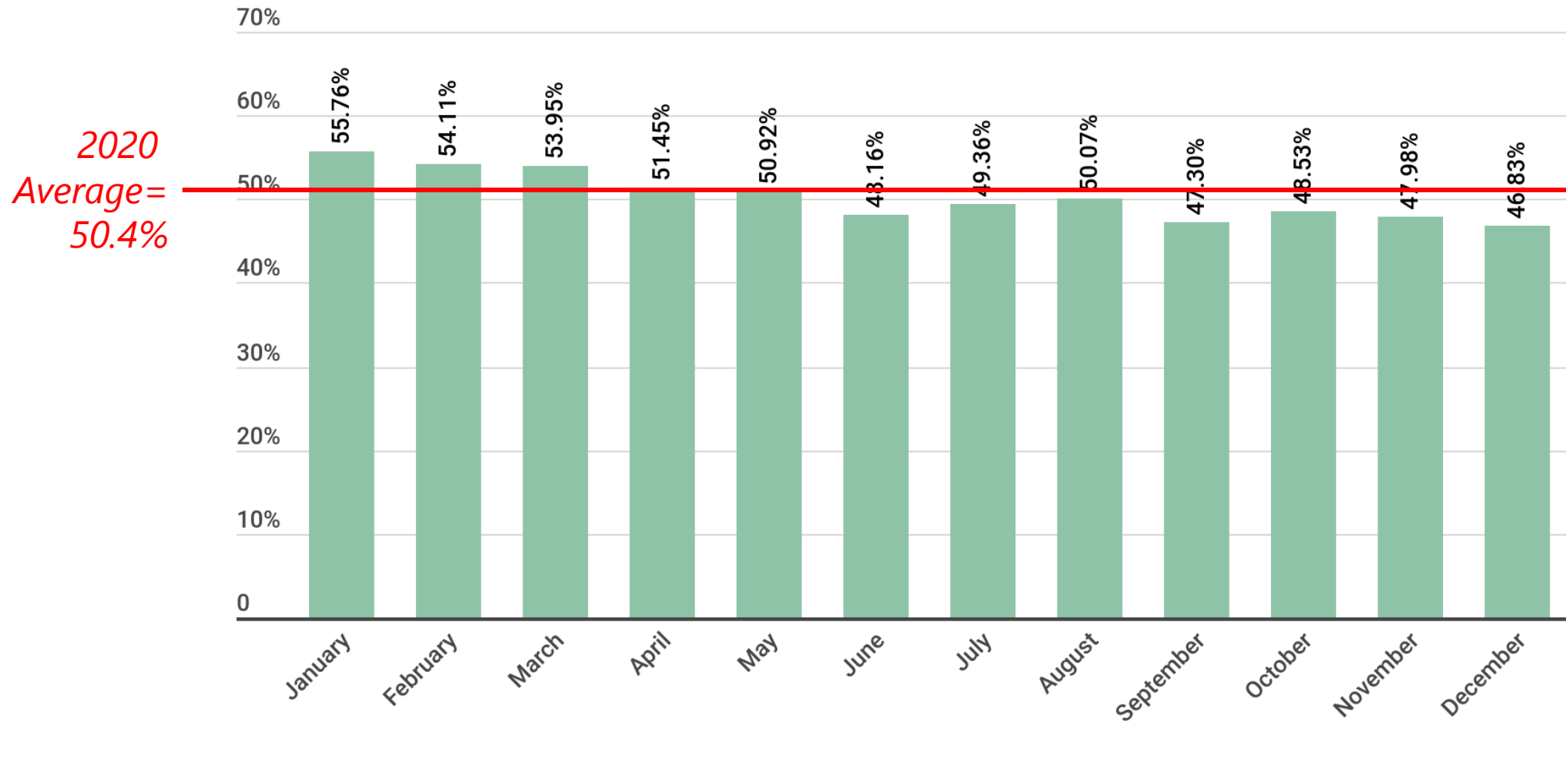


## Audience Challenge Question

**Of the 333.2 billion emails sent per day, how many emails are spam?**

- 94.0 billion per day (28.2%)
- 167.9 billion per day (50.4%)
- 261.9 billion per day (78.6%)
- 284.2 billion per day (85.3%)

# PERCENTAGE OF EMAIL THAT IS SPAM



# EMAIL'S DISADVANTAGES



- Cheap ✓ *why it is attractive to spammers*
- Easy ✓
- Able to cover long distances instantly ✓
- Always accessible
- Asynchronous ✓
- It can carry payloads ✓



- Mitigation created deliverability issues
  - heuristic filters
  - validation methods
    - SPF
    - DKIM
    - DMARC
- Malware payloads
  - most common way for malware to enter the enterprise
  - both links and enclosures can be malicious



## DELIVERABILITY IS NOW TENUOUS

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- Even organizations like the ACS can be listed as spam senders based predictive (heuristic) filters
- Email mismatch errors
- Blacklisting can be indiscriminate
- Deliverability protocols continue to evolve

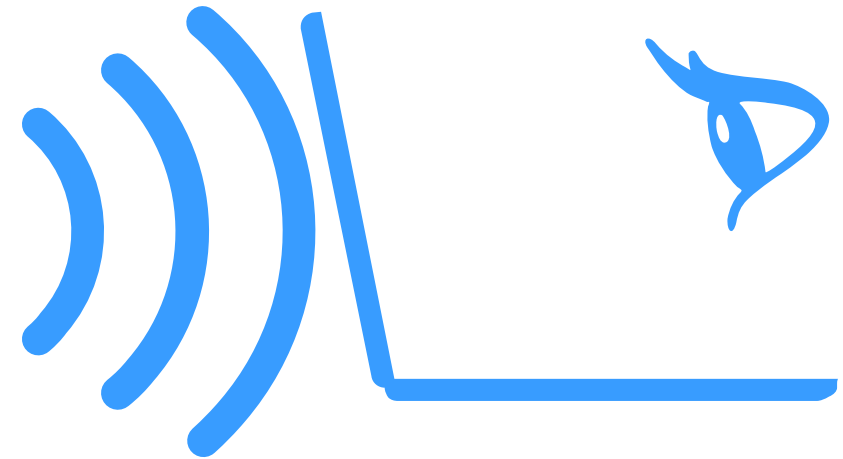


# RECEIVING EMAIL

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- Don't click links embedded in email
- When possible, navigate to sites rather than trusting links
- If you must click, only click from known senders that you've verified
- If you must click, roll-over and ensure the URL is anticipated and consistent with sender
- Lots of vectors for malware in enclosures
  - files may of correct type
  - links may display different than they execute
  - do not let macros run





# EFFECTIVE EMAIL: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS



- Enclosures
  - think of the recipient (your audience)
  - don't include enclosures if they aren't necessary
  - excerpt into email if there is a particular question
- Links when appropriate rather than files
  - smaller emails
  - let's the recipient download when it is appropriate
  - points recipient to current version of a file/resource





- Aliases
  - email addresses that come to your normal email account that can be easily filtered
  - server software allows aliases if you run your own server
  - add a plus sign (+) and append stuff
    - markjones+acs@gmail.com for example





## Audience Challenge Answer



What percentage of organizations had at least one user try to connect to a phishing site?

- 12%
- 43%
- 86%
- 99%



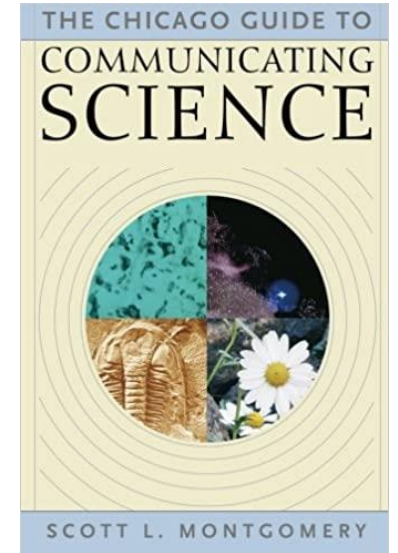
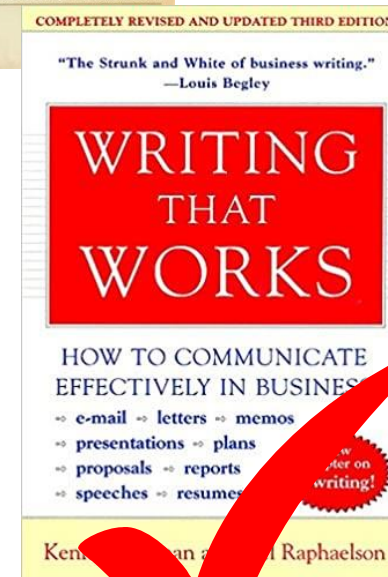
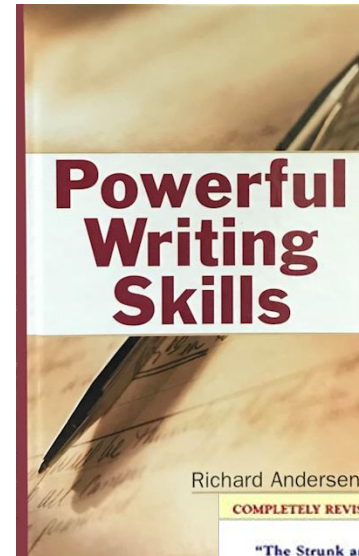
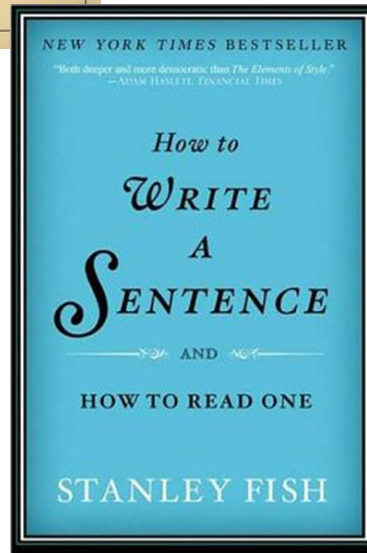
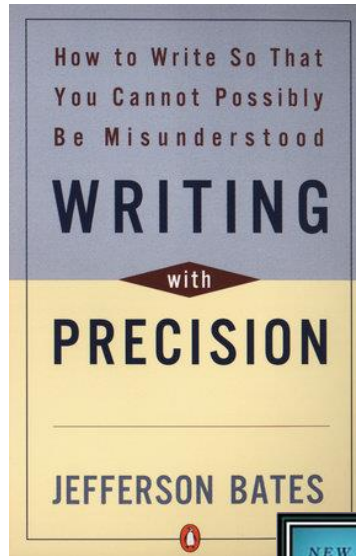
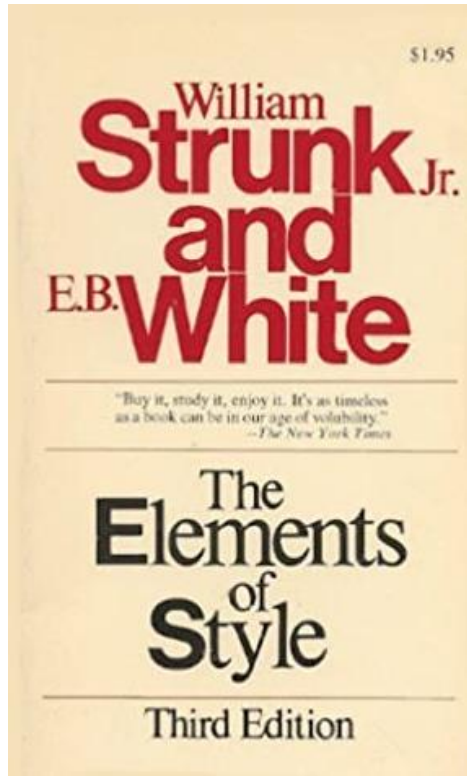


Tools  
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- Subject *make it useful*
- Recipients *who needs to act, know*
- Body *be as short as practical*
- Enclosures *think before you enclose*
- Your Address *professional*

# FAVORITE REFERENCES - WRITING



# REFERENCES

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- *Forbes* article on when you shouldn't email: [www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2019/03/13/3-times-when-you-really-shouldnt-email/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2019/03/13/3-times-when-you-really-shouldnt-email/)
- The Language Lab email pitfalls: [www.thelanguagelab.ca/posts/its-more-than-just-an-email-pitfalls-of-email-communication/](http://www.thelanguagelab.ca/posts/its-more-than-just-an-email-pitfalls-of-email-communication/)
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