# What Your Email Sign-Off Is Really Saying

Find out what business etiquette experts have to say about the expressions we use to end work-related emails.

February 20, 2019 6 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

You've just finished composing an email to a potential client you've talked with a few times before. Now for the tricky part: your sign-off. Should you use "Sincerely," "Kind regards" or "Cheers"? How do you sound friendly without coming across as unprofessional? And then there are the emails to your employees, business contacts and friendly acquaintances.

Unfortunately, there's no "email bible" to guide you. That's why we contacted two business communication experts to discuss what's appropriate. Suzanne Bates, president and CEO of Bates Communications, Inc. and author of *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets For Commanding Attention and Getting Results*, and Cherie Kerr, founder of ExecuProv and author of *The Bliss or "Diss" Connection? Email Etiquette For The Business Professional*, pair up to give expert insight into the world of e-mail correspondence.

**Related: Need a Business Idea? Here are 55**

Read on to find out what message your favorite e-mail goodbye is actually sending.

**The salutation:** "Thanks"
**Bates:** It's OK if you're actually thanking people. But keep in mind it's casual; you should know them if you're using this

sign-off.
**Kerr:** This is one of the safest and most courteous of the salutations. It keeps it pleasant, but professional.

**The salutation:** “Ciao”
**Bates:** This isn’t for business, except for fashion, art or real Italians.
**Kerr:** “Ciao” should only be used for close buddies or work pals. It’s not appropriate for business purposes.

**The salutation:** “Sincerely”
**Bates:** Tried and true for a formal business close, and you’ll never offend anyone.
**Kerr:** A bit too formal for e-mail. This salutation can put people off. People really expect this in a letter, not an e-mail.

**The salutation:** “Kind regards”
**Bates:** This is a great all-purpose business salutation. It may be best for people you have corresponded with in the past.
**Kerr:** This is one I use quite often. I like some kind of warmth, but also keep it business-like. I tend to use “Kindest regards.”

**Related:**

**100 Businesses You Can Start With Less Than $100**

**The salutation:** “Regards”
**Bates:** It’s less friendly than “Kind regards,” and can be a bit perfunctory, but it generally works well.
**Kerr:** This salutation is a little short and a little distant, but at least it’s a closing message.

**The salutation:** “Best”
**Bates:** “Best” is colloquial, but fine for someone you know. “Best wishes” or “Best regards” would be better for business.
**Kerr:** This is another acceptable sign-off, especially if you’re using it with someone you know really well.

**The salutation:** “Cheers”
**Bates:** Only use this sign-off for friends and business colleagues you might meet for coffee.
**Kerr:** You can use this with someone you know well, but if you’re trying to make a business impression, this is not a great way to say goodbye when you’re first doing business with someone. Save it for after having established a bond.

**The salutation:** “TGIF”
**Bates:** Never use this salutation for your boss.
**Kerr:** Use it for a good work buddy at clock-out time on Friday.

**The salutation:** “Talk soon”
**Bates:** Very nice for a friend, but you better mean it.
**Kerr:** It’s a nice way to sign-off. It lets the other person know there will be phone or face time soon, and that’s important and appreciated in this wacky age of e-mail. People need to talk more.

**The salutation:** “Later”
**Bates:** Not appropriate for business correspondence; it sounds like you’re 14 years old.
**Kerr:** Only use this salutation in friendly business relationships.

**The salutation:** “Cordially”
**Bates:** It’s a little old-fashioned, but not offensive.
**Kerr:** This is safe and pleasant and gives people a “feel good” close at the end of your e-mail.

**The salutation:** “Yours truly”
**Bates:** Excellent for formal business.
**Kerr:** Too formal for e-mail.

**The salutation:** No salutation at all – just an electronic signature
**Bates:** There is a school of thought that an email is not a letter; I don’t subscribe to that. I think most people come to

the end of a note and expect a closing. It could come across as abrupt without one. It may also subtly say, “I’m in a hurry,” “I don’t know how to sign- off,” or “I’m not someone who cares about niceties.”
**Kerr:** Always use a salutation, but don’t be redundant. Change it up. That makes people think you care by taking the time to “converse” with them by email.

**Related:**

**50 Jobs, Gigs and Side Hustles You Can Do From Home**

Aside from salutations, Bates and Kerr pointed out a few other email faux pas:

- **Avoid writing in caps.** Bates says people will be so perplexed as to why the email is in all caps that they won’t be focusing on what you have to say. Kerr agrees, pointing out that writing in bold or caps comes across in an email as yelling. “Even saying ‘Have a good day’ in all caps might sound sarcastic,” says Kerr.
- **Don’t use emoticons.** Smiley faces and different expressions can be fun to use, but according to both experts, they’re not appropriate for business correspondence. “They’re not professional, however, they’re quite common. My advice is, for business, leave them out,” advises Bates. Kerr suggests trying to use appropriate words to convey the feelings you’re trying to express.
- **Think before you write.** Profanity is definitely an email no-no. Kerr says profanity hits harder on the computer screen than when you might say it in passing. She also recommends limiting use of the word “really” or other intensifiers. According to Bates, a good rule of thumb is, “Avoid using any word you wouldn’t want to see on the front page of *The New York Times* with your signature next to it.”
- **Consider the context of the e-mail and the receiver when**

**using trendy words.** A popular sign-off entering plenty of inboxes right now is “Cheers.” Bates suggests thinking about the email text and the receiver before using a word like that. Stay current with your word choice so you don’t appear behind the times. Kerr’s favorite trendy salutation of late: “Muchly,” sent to her by a friend.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/180872