

Time Mastery for Child Care Professionals: 5 Tips for Smart Email Management

1. Check email just a few times a day. As few as you can get away with—very few people need to check more frequently than hourly, and for most of us, twice a day is sufficient. You might even be able to get away with just once a day, you lucky duck!

2. Check email only at set times. Maybe your times are 10 am and 3 pm—or 9 am, noon, and 5 pm. It doesn't really matter what they are, but pick set times and stick to them. If you are concerned about people looking for you in the meantime, add a message to your email signature.

If you realize, outside these set times, that you need to send an email, make a note to yourself and send it during your regular session rather than popping in specially to do it (unless it's truly an emergency, which email sends rarely are).

3. Process all emails as fully as you can during your email session. Because you are checking email just a few times a day (see above), it's important to do so at a time when you can truly *deal* with the messages that are there – this is not a quick scroll through while you're waiting in the checkout line. You should be doing one of the following with each message that comes in:

- **Delete it:** If you don't need it anymore, trash it. Many emails will fall into this category: Information that you will remember, an appointment that you transfer to your calendar, "FYI" emails that don't require action or follow-up from you, spam, etc.
- **Deal with it:** If an email can be answered in 2-3 minutes or less, do it right then.
- **Defer it:** If you need more info, or more time, before taking action on a given email, you can either leave it in your inbox, move it to a different file in your email system, or print it out and file it in one of your hard-copy folders. Beware of letting too many "later" emails pile up in your inbox!
- **File it:** If you need an email for future reference, move it to a different file in your email system or to a hard-copy "reference" folder.

4. Regularly unsubscribe from any emails you don't want to receive. This will help keep your inbox uncluttered. I recommend having a separate email address you use only for online ordering, etc., to avoid clogging up your primary inbox(es).

5. Have set times of the week when you don't check email at all. Email sabbaticals, if you will—I recommend part or all of the weekend—help keep your mind and schedule clear.

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