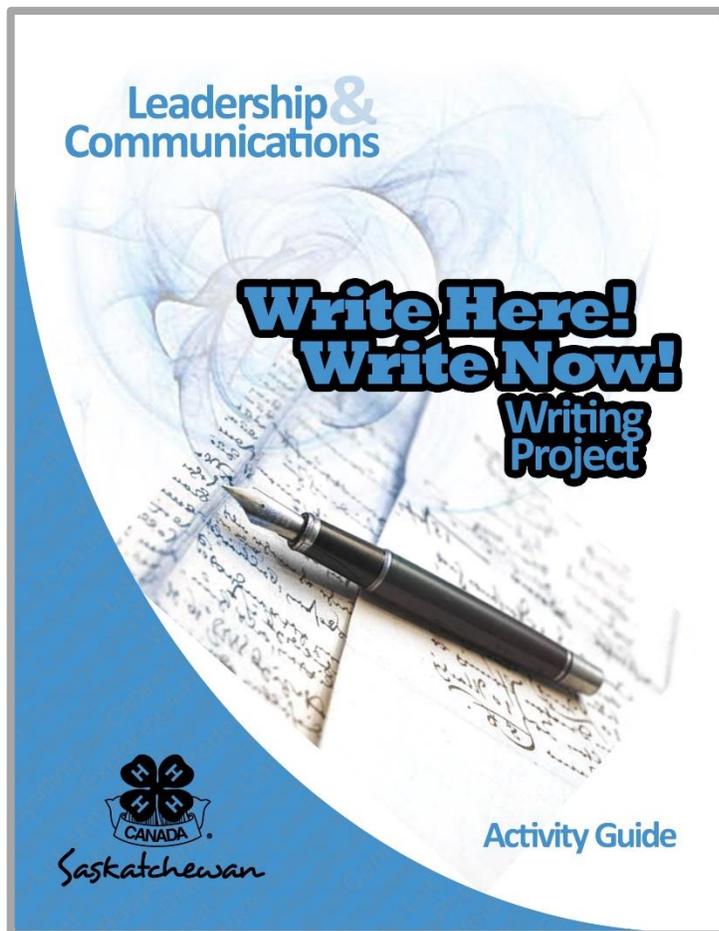# Exploring 4-H at Home

Community Engagement and Communications

Pillar: Community Engagement and Communications

Project: Write Here! Write Now!

Activity: Writing an Email (pg. 4)

Leadership & Communications

Write Here! Write Now! Writing Project

Saskatchewan

Activity Guide

Introduction

Email can save time, but its speed can also be a disadvantage. Once you hit "Send," there's no turning back. After it's gone, you might wish you could change the words you wrote. But it's too late.

A letter can be formal or informal. And so can an email. If you're emailing a friend to ask if she's going to the game, it's fine to use texting slang. On the other hand, if you're emailing your relatives, asking your teacher about an assignment or applying for a job, you'll need to use full words and sentences. To many older people, people in positions of authority and people who don't know you personally, full words, correctly spelled and proper grammar **show respect.**

One problem with email and with texting and with written letters is that the person you're communicating with cannot see you. That's a problem because **much of our communication is non-verbal.** That means that in an actual encounter, when two or more people are in the same room and can see each other, much of what is said and understood is from the facial expression of the speaker. Body language can also play a part. And so can **tone of voice**. A sentence that is written with one meaning in the mind of the writer can be given an entirely different meaning by the person reading the email, text or letter.

For example, if Jasmine and Rachel are together and Jasmine says to Rachel: "I just love opera music. I listen to it all the time," in a sarcastic tone of voice, and then smiles and winks, Rachel will understand that Jasmine doesn't really love opera music.

But, what if those same words were written in an email? Rachel can't see Jasmine or hear her tone of voice. She might take the words at face value and not understand that Jasmine was joking. It's important to make sure your meaning is clear in an email, especially if you're making a joke. Could the person receiving the email understand that you are joking or will they take you seriously and be hurt? Before you send an email, take a minute and **think about how you would feel if you received the email** you just wrote.

An email exists forever. Maybe you're angry or sad or excited and it all spills out onto an email. "Wow! It feels so good to get that out!" you say to yourself. "When he/she reads this he/she will really pay attention. He/she will know exactly how I feel and why he/she is completely and totally wrong!"

But will you feel differently next week or tomorrow or in an hour? And will you wish you hadn't sent that email? If your emotions are in charge, why not take a minute or an hour or a day to chill out before you send that email? But writing things down can help to sort out our feelings. Instead of putting them in an email, why not put them in a blank file, protected with a password, or in your journal?

Activity Instructions

Write two emails. You can do this on a piece of paper or on a computer. Think about who you are writing to and why during this activity. How will this affect the words and tone that you use? Afterwards, reread the email from the other person's perspective. Would they understand what you are trying to say?

Email One – Your Best Friend

- You want to meet up with your friend at the park

- You have to figure out where, when and for how long you are going to play

- You can also give some suggestions for activities

Email Two – Your Teacher

- You just got back a project you worked really hard on, but the teacher did not give you a very good grade

- You are emailing them to ask if they could look at your project again

- You are quite upset, but you also have to be polite. What kinds of words could you choose?

Reflection

- If you were the one receiving these emails, how would you feel? Would you want to play at the park? Would you think about looking at the project again?

- Was it hard or easy to write the emails? Why or why not?

- What is the best way to talk to someone? In-person? Phone call? Email? Letter?