

The Unofficial Workplace Translation Guide

An unscientific guide to what you send and what they hear

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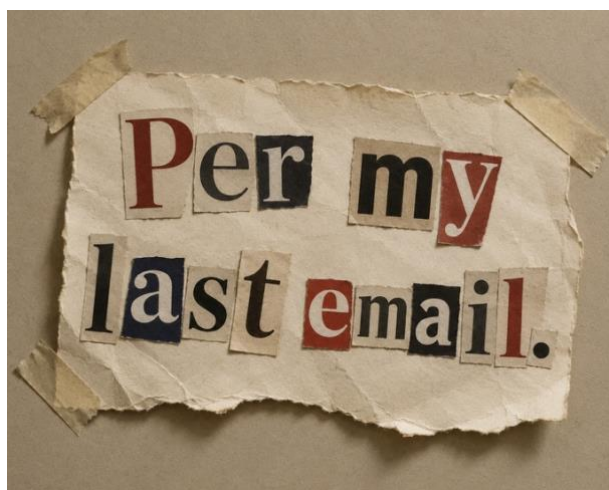
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Digital Communication

Where most workplace misunderstandings now begin.

	Signal	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z
1.	Thumbs Up	Agreement	Efficient acknowledgement	Slightly abrupt	Passive aggressive
2.	Heart reaction ♥	Slightly unprofessional	Supportive but intense	Supportive	Completely normal
3.	Full stop in chat "Ok."	Proper grammar	Normal punctuation	Slight tension	Emotional threat detected
4.	Replying "K"	Short response	Need to buy a vowel?	Annoyed	Relationship-ending behaviour
5.	Using "... " at end of sentence	Continuing a thought	Normal typing habit	Slightly ominous	Emotional manipulation
6.	Typing full sentences in chat	Professional	Normal	Slightly formal	Are you upset with me?
7.	Double spacing after a full stop	Correct grammar	Old habits die hard	Wait... people still do this?	Archaeological evidence
8.	No greeting in email	Efficient	Weird, but fine	Slightly cold	Rude
9.	"Please see attached"	Professional	Standard	Formal	Why are we talking like lawyers?
10.	"Per my last email"	Clarification	Uh oh	Passive aggressive	Digital violence
11.	"As discussed"	Helpful summary	Documentation	Oh no	You are building a case against me
12.	"Please advise."	Professional	Abrupt	Slightly threatening	Why does this sound legally binding?
13.	"Noted."	Understood	Fine	Cold	Emotional assassination
14.	Reply All	Keeping everyone informed	Risky	Someone's about to embarrass themselves	Digital terrorism
15.	"Just following up..."	Professional persistence	Fair enough	I forgot and now feel guilty	I'm being hunted
16.	cc'ing someone's manager	Visibility	Escalation	Political move	Declare war properly next time
17.	Message marked "Urgent"	Important	Probably not urgent	Mild panic	Fight or flight mode has now been activated



Meetings, Messages & Workplace Panic

The modern workplace runs primarily on calendar invites and low-grade anxiety.

Signal	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z
18. "Can we chat?"	Normal conversation	Probably annoying	What did I do wrong?	Immediate nervous system activation
19. Sending "You free?"	Starting a conversation	Get to the point	What's wrong?	I've already panicked
20. Phone call without warning	Normal	Hope this is quick	Mildly alarming	Fight or flight response
21. "Let me just call them"	How problems get solved	Sensible	Oh... actually that's faster	Terrifying. Effective. Slightly aggressive.
22. Calendar invite without an agenda or context	Efficient	Annoying	Anxiety-inducing	Absolutely unacceptable
23. Sending a meeting with an agenda	Prepared	Helpful	Respectful	Basic requirement
24. Someone typing while you're speaking in a meeting	Taking notes	Probably emailing	Are they listening?	Multitasking survival
25. "Can everyone turn cameras on?"	Engagement	Fine	Ugh	You're asking to enter my home
26. Camera off in Teams	Bandwidth issue	Bad hair day	Probably overwhelmed	Socially acceptable
27. Turning camera on immediately	Professional courtesy	Fine if necessary	Depends how tired I look	Deeply personal request
28. "Thoughts?" after a presentation	Invitation for discussion	Please let this end	I should probably say something	Why has this been thrown to the group with no structure?
29. Silence after a question	Thinking time	Nobody wants extra work	Someone needs to speak	This is a hostile environment
30. Sending a calendar invite for 16:30 Friday	Scheduling	Annoying	Emotionally violent	Criminal behaviour
31. "No worries if not!"	Polite	Fine	Social pressure trap	You absolutely mind
32. Using exclamation marks in messages	Friendly	Slightly enthusiastic	Emotionally regulating tone	Standard punctuation
33. WRITING IN ALL CAPS	Caps lock was just on when I started this	Emphasis	Why are you yelling at me?	I am no longer psychologically safe
34. Reacting 🙌 to a long message or email	Acknowledged	Efficient	Oh no	Ice cold
35. Asking people to introduce themselves at the start of a meeting	Team building	Mild torture	Depends on the group	Absolutely not
36. Starting meetings exactly on time	Professional	Respectful	Efficient	Weirdly aggressive





Leadership & Psychological Safety

The same words can feel radically different depending on the culture around them.

Signal	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z
37. "My door is always open"	Leadership support	Come if it's important	What happened to the last person who walked through it?	I'll need evidence before attempting this
38. "What does success look like?"	You're overthinking it	Smart question	That would be useful	Here you go - isn't everyone doing this?
39. Declining a meeting: "I can't add value"	Bold	Efficient	I could never	Basic self-management
40. "Do you have capacity?"	Thoughtful leadership	Better than just assigning it	Respectful	Basic human decency
41. Asking for feedback regularly	Keen. Possibly needy.	Self-aware	Growth mindset	Expected
42. "That felt dismissive"	Confrontational	Depends on the tone	Brave	Healthier than pretending it didn't happen
43. Sharing personal struggles at work	Inappropriate	It depends on who's asking	Human	Healthy leadership
44. "We're a family here"	Loyalty	Red flag	Massive red flag	Immediate exit strategy
45. Message sent after hours	Dedicated	Clearing inbox	Boundary concern	Toxic work culture
46. Taking leave without checking email	Brave	Aspirational	Healthy	Well, obviously
47. Leaving exactly on time every day	Not very committed	Smart	Healthy boundaries	Why have start/finish times otherwise?
48. Being "busy"	Important	Permanent state of existence	Potential burnout	Not a personality trait



Workplace Social Rules

The unofficial norms nobody explains, but everybody notices.

	Signal	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z
49.	Birthday cake in the office	Team culture	Free cake	Thoughtful gesture	Is attendance mandatory?
50.	After-work drinks	Relationship building	Optional	Networking with snacks	Sounds exhausting
51.	Work trivia night	Community	I already spend enough time with you people	I'll go if my work friends are going	Absolutely not, unless there's a group chat first
52.	Sharing family photos at work	Friendly conversation	Fine in moderation	Connection	Wholesome
53.	Not attending social events	Not a team player	Probably has stuff on	Protecting boundaries	Completely normal
54.	Eating lunch at your desk	Dedicated	Efficient	Sad	Absolutely not
55.	"We should catch up for coffee"	Genuine invitation	Maybe one day	Social placeholder	Why are we making fake plans?
56.	Decorating your workspace	Personality	Mild clutter	Team identity	Emotional support environment
57.	Walking up to someone's desk unannounced	Collaboration	Mildly annoying	Slightly stressful	Home invasion
58.	Remembering your partner's name, your pet	Basic courtesy	A nice touch	Genuinely kind	Unexpectedly wholesome
59.	Slack/Teams/phone message: "Hi" and nothing else	Greeting	Suspicious	Please get to the point	Psychological warfare
60.	Typing indicator appearing and disappearing	Still typing	Multitasking	Overthinking response	They hate me



Technology, AI & Other Things Quietly Destroying Workplace Norms

Somewhere along the way, we all adapted to completely different versions of "normal."

Signal	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial	Gen Z
61. Using AI to draft something	Cutting corners	Depends on what for	Smart leverage	Why would you not?
62. Using GIFs at work	Unprofessional	Occasionally funny	Team culture	Essential communication tool
63. Voice note	Personal touch	Why not just call?	Helpful context	Normal
64. Watching videos with subtitles	Can't hear properly	Distracting	Helpful	Mandatory
65. Watching content at 1.5x speed	You can do that?	Depends how boring it is	Efficient	Still too slow
66. Read receipts turned on	Transparency	Dangerous	Social pressure	Psychological warfare
67. Wearing headphones at work	Antisocial	Leave me alone	Focus mode	Default operating system
68. Phone ringtone on in public	Reachable	Risky	Embarrassing	Absolutely unhinged
69. Using speakerphone in public	Normal	Absolutely not	Slightly chaotic	Criminal behaviour
70. Leaving a voicemail	Professional	Necessary evil	Please just text me	Ancient ritual
71. Writing notes by hand	Normal	Helps me think	Romanticises productivity	It's kind of aesthetic
72. Showing up early to a meeting	Respectful	Safe buffer	Responsible	Aggressive overachievement
73. "Just circling back"	Professional follow-up	Fine	I have failed this person	Why are you chasing me publicly
74. Aggressive alarm tone	It wakes you up	Horrific	Anxiety-inducing	Absolutely not — birdsong only
75. Eating lunch alone	A bit sad	Bliss	Recharge time	Self-care



Of course, none of these are universally true.

Shared with curiosity, never judgment.

(Except maybe using a speakerphone in public. We need to talk about that.)

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