

6 things you shouldn't put in writing

While email, text or social media may be the predominant way you communicate these days—they definitely shouldn't be the only way you communicate.

In fact, here are six things you should never put in writing—unless, that is, you want to risk sharing your words with the world:

- 1. Confidential information you shouldn't see.** If you come across a list of employees who are on the chopping block, for example, you could feel compelled to share it. However, you could land yourself in serious legal trouble if you share anything that you haven't been granted explicit permission to share. If you stumble upon something that concerns you, talk to your boss or HR. Don't take it upon yourself to alert everyone else.
- 2. Derogatory remarks.** Even seemingly harmless jokes can come back to haunt you, especially in cases where you have been accused of sexist, racist, ageist or offensive behavior.
- 3. Criticism.** Don't offer negative feedback to an employee, complain about your boss, bad-mouth a co-worker, or put down your organization. If a conversation needs to happen, such as providing performance feedback, do it during a face-to-face conversation. If it doesn't need to be said at work, vent when you get home to a spouse or close friend.

Unfortunately, you can't guarantee that the recipient won't share your thoughts with someone else.
- 4. Gossip.** It's a toxic behavior in the workplace, and one that most managers will take action against. When you share gossip over email or text, recipients could share it with any number of people, and that creates a paper trail right back to you.
- 5. Complaints about customers.** The risk is just too great that you or someone else could respond to the customer and accidentally attach or forward your comments. It happens all the time and can ruin relationships with customers.
- 6. Your nonwork activities.** Talking about how hard you partied last night, your day of gambling, your hot date or other less-than-appropriate activities is risky. If the messages somehow end up in the wrong hands, it could hurt your reputation.