

It's A Funny Old World

'The first birthday card my ex-husband gave me was signed 'best wishes' – followed by his full name'

I rent out a holiday cottage and over the years I have become pretty hot at spotting who to avoid and who will be fine. I've learnt the hard way, though, and now I know there are clues to be found in emails.

Naturally, I only want lovely people to stay at my cottage – people who are willing to have a wonderful time in the beautiful area of West Dorset; who will not upset my neighbours and who will look after my home as if it is their own.

In the main I have been very lucky, although there have been a few rogues along the way. Like the lot who rented it out one Christmas and then wanted their money back because all of them were allergic to dog hairs. Funny that, considering that they didn't complain until the end of their week and I didn't have a dog at the time.

Generally speaking, emails can tell you whether a person is warm or cold, funny or pompous, assertive or demanding, considerate or arrogant, givers or takers and so much more. Of course, this is not an exact science, but once you're aware of how much an email can reveal, you will have a much clearer idea whether or not it's worth doing business with the sender.

I am instantly suspicious of people who sign their emails 'best'. I don't know why, but to me it seems a cold and lazy sign-off. They're not wishing you the best at all – they really couldn't give a damn. For years I've been signing my business emails 'Warm wishes, Caroline'. It seems a lot more real than the impersonal 'Best wishes'. When I'm feeling well disposed towards the sender, I up the ante and reply 'warmest wishes' – and I mean it.

Naturally, in our personal lives the people we know and love get the 'lots of love and hugs' sort of sign-off, although that can get a bit competitive.



This week's columnist:
Author and counsellor
Caroline Buchanan

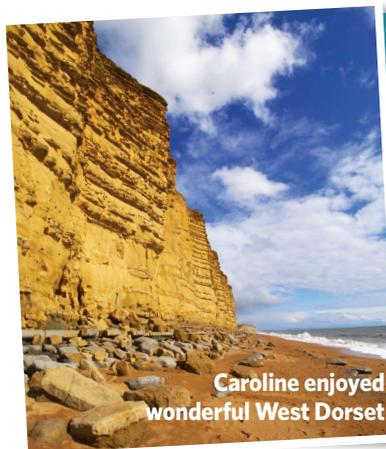
For example, 'huge love and big fat hugs back to you' or 'millions and trillions of kisses'. But at least you know that it's all done with heart.

Now I realise we have to make allowances for the difference between SHE-mails and HE-mails. I've not studied man-to-man emails, but I guess they concentrate on the practical arrangements of the exchange. Woman-to-woman emails are quite likely to have a few feelings thrown into the mix.

Man-to-woman and woman-to-woman, business or pleasure, I bet you a zillion pings you could pinpoint the sex of the sender. By the way, the first birthday card my ex-husband gave me was signed 'Best wishes' followed by his full name – he had then visibly crossed out his surname. We were living together so it was disturbing to say the least! I should have seen the writing on the wall then.

To return to my cottage, the customers who are welcomed back with open arms nearly always write a thank-you email in response to mine, saying I hope they had a lovely time. The ones who don't bother I probably won't hear from again, unless they have a complaint. They'll be on their email then at the speed of light. Fortunately, these are few and far between – and hopefully I respond appropriately.

Warmest wishes to you all!



Caroline enjoyed wonderful West Dorset

My Funny Old Week

Where I've been... Gorgeous **West Dorset**.

What I've seen... Live bands at the Beaminster Festival.

Who I've met... Two delightful women who have each had three husbands.

What I've bought... Another fabulous poncho in the sale from Colmers Hill Fashion in Symondsburry.

❖ **The 15 Minute Rule: How To Stop Procrastinating And Take Control Of Your Life by Caroline Buchanan (£7.99, Robinson) is out now**

Photos: Alamy

NEXT WEEK
Lynne Truss