

Netiquette Lesson Resources

From: Netiquette (<http://www.albion.com/netiquette>)

Remember the human

The golden rule your parents and your kindergarten teacher taught you was pretty simple: Do unto others as you'd have others do unto you. Imagine how you'd feel if you were in the other person's shoes. Stand up for yourself, but try not to hurt people's feelings. In cyberspace, we state this in an even more basic manner: Remember the human.

When you're holding a conversation online—whether it's an email exchange or a response to a discussion group posting—it's easy to misinterpret your correspondent's meaning. And it's frighteningly easy to forget that your correspondent is a person with feelings more or less like your own. The message of Netiquette is that it's not acceptable to be rude. Yes, use your network connections to express yourself freely, explore strange new worlds, and boldly go where you've never gone before. But remember the Prime Directive of Netiquette: Those are real people out there.

Would you say it to the person's face?

Here's a useful test for anything you're about to post or mail: Ask yourself, "Would I say this to the person's face?" If the answer is no, rewrite and reread. Repeat the process till you feel sure that you'd feel as comfortable saying these words to the live person as you do sending them through cyberspace.

Another reason not to be offensive online

When you communicate through cyberspace—via email or on discussion groups—your words are written. And chances are they're stored somewhere where you have no control over them. In other words, there's a good chance they can come back to haunt you.

Never forget the story of famous email user Oliver North. Ollie, you'll remember, was a great devotee of the White House email system, PROFS. He diligently deleted all incriminating notes he sent or received. What he didn't realize was that, somewhere else in the White House, computer room staff were equally diligently backing up the mainframe where his messages were stored. When he went on trial, all those handy backup tapes were readily available as evidence against him.

You don't have to be engaged in criminal activity to want to be careful. Any message you send could be saved or forwarded by its recipient. You have no control over where it goes.

Respect other people's privacy

The case of the snoop foreign correspondent

In 1993, a highly regarded foreign correspondent in the Moscow bureau of the Los Angeles Times was caught reading his coworkers' email. His colleagues became suspicious when system records showed that someone had logged in to check their email at times when they knew they hadn't been near the computer. So they set up a sting operation. They planted false

information in messages from another one of the paper's foreign bureaus. The reporter read the notes and later asked colleagues about the false information. Bingo! As a disciplinary measure, he was immediately reassigned to another position at the paper's Los Angeles bureau.

The moral: Failing to respect other people's privacy is not just bad Netiquette. It could also cost you your job.

Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

When someone makes a mistake—whether it's a spelling error or a spelling flame, a stupid question or an unnecessarily long answer—be kind about it. If it's a minor error, you may not need to say anything. Even if you feel strongly about it, think twice before reacting. Having good manners yourself doesn't give you license to correct everyone else.

If you do decide to inform someone of a mistake, point it out politely, and preferably by private email rather than in public. Give people the benefit of the doubt; assume they just don't know any better. And never be arrogant or self-righteous about it. Just as it's a law of nature that spelling flames always contain spelling errors, notes pointing out Netiquette violations are often examples of poor Netiquette.

From: Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics
(<http://www.fau.edu/netiquette/net/ten.htm>)

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

1. Do not use a computer to harm other people.
2. Do not interfere with other people's computer work.
3. Do not snoop around in other people's computer files.
4. Do not use a computer to steal.
5. Do not use a computer to lie.
6. Do not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid.
7. Do not use other people's computer resources without authorization.
8. Do not plagiarize
9. Think about the social consequences of pictures and messages you post.
10. Always use a computer in ways that ensure consideration and respect for your fellow humans.

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The Institute gives full permission to copy and use these commandments, with the request that the source be acknowledged.

From: Netiquette for Educators by Joni Turville
(<http://www.iccb.state.il.us/mentor/resources/netiquette.html>)

General Netiquette

The following points apply to all types of electronic communication:

- Make your messages brief and concise.
- Use proper spelling, grammar, and capitalization—even if this isn't always the standard.
- Don't use all capitals in your subject line or in your message unless you want to emphasize something. It is considered the equivalent of SHOUTING. If you want to make a point, try using **asterisks** or *underscore* around the word or phrase you want to stress.
- Give your message a meaningful subject heading that reflects the content of the email. It helps the recipient to sort them easily.
- Clip the content of the original message in a reply and include only the part that is pertinent. That way the reader doesn't have to scroll forever to remember what was said.
- Ask the original author's permission before forwarding their message to someone else.
- Be careful with humor and sarcasm. Without the benefit of body language or vocal inflection, your words can be easily misinterpreted. Try using smileys, or emoticons, if you want to make sure the reader knows you are joking (but sparingly, because they can get annoying too!).
- Use acronyms sparingly (for example: IMHO = in my humble opinion, BTW = by the way), as all readers may not know what they mean.
- Never give anyone else your login identification or password.
- Remember that new users may make mistakes. Be patient.

Email Netiquette

- Include a signature line at the end of your email that contains your title, address, and phone number so people have other ways to contact you if it becomes necessary. Most email programs have functions that enable you to create a signature line that will appear automatically on the bottom of all your outgoing mail.
- cc (carbon copy) or bcc (blind carbon copy) to your own email address if you want to keep a copy of an email. It will show the date and time the message was sent.
- Use good virus protection software and scan attachments before opening them.
- Never assume that email is totally private. It is a good practice to never send anything that you wouldn't want shared in public.
- Don't attach very large files without the permission of the user. Some people may have slower connections and sending a very large video file as a joke, for example, might end up not being very funny if it ties up their computer for a long time. A better idea is to limit attachments to text only, and use ftp for large ones.

- Don't send "carbon copies" of those funny email jokes to everyone you know. People are busy and it's good to check with them to make sure they want to be receiving this sort of mail.
- Don't use HTML or special settings in your email like special fonts or colors. Many older email readers won't be able to recognize them (and many users find them annoying).

Discussion Group Netiquette

- "Lurk" on a new discussion group a while, so you can get a feel for the kind of messages and responses that are posted.
- Look for a "help" page or read the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) for the list if they are available.
- Save the message you receive after you subscribe in a special folder. It will give you the necessary information if you want to unsubscribe later on.
- Don't "cross-post" – one discussion group per post.
- Consider including a notation in your subject line (e.g., [long post]) if you are posting a note that's particularly lengthy.
- Remember that new users may make mistakes. Be professional and patient.
- Don't post to the entire group when a personal email reply to one person will do.
- Don't flame. Flaming is a barrage of angry email directed towards a person or persons.
- Don't just repeat or agree with what has already been said or your "I agree" goes to a very long list of people who will be annoyed at having to delete a message without useful content.
- Don't post a message that is critical of a colleague (or might be perceived as critical). It might hinder someone from posting or participating in the future.
- Don't post anything you wouldn't want turning up later on. Many groups archive their messages.
- The online world is like any new culture. When you travel to another country, you follow its socially accepted guidelines, and online behavior is no different.
- It's worldwide. The things you post on public discussion groups and newsgroups are available for the entire world to see. Even e-mail can't be assumed to be totally private.
- It's a reflection on you. The things you communicate through e-mail, listservs, and discussion groups are a reflection on you and your organization.
- Using online communication can seem impersonal, but remember that there are human beings with feelings on the other side of your screen.

From: Boston Public Library – Netiquette for Kids http://www.iccb.state.il.us/mentor/resources/netiquette.html

1. Avoid hurting someone's feelings with e-mail.

Sometimes, online, people can't tell that you are joking. When you write an e-mail message, make sure the person you're sending it to will know whether you are happy, sad, angry, joking, etc. You can do this by using smileys, such as :).

2. Respect other people's online rights.

People on the Internet have rights just as they do in everyday life. If someone sends you a threatening letter, or makes crank phone calls to your house, it can be annoying and sometimes very scary. The same is true on the Internet. If someone sends you e-mail which threatens you or makes you feel uncomfortable, talk to a parent or other adult right away.

3. Avoid insulting someone unless you want to start a flame war.

A flame war is when angry people try to punish each other with e-mail. Sometimes this can be done by sending so many messages that a mailbox gets jammed, and sometimes this is done by sending a few very nasty messages meant to hurt someone's feelings. If you insult someone with e-mail, they will probably get angry just as they would if you insulted them face to face.

4. If someone insults you, be calm.

Starting a flame war is serious business on the Net. Even if you are angry with someone, you don't need to take things any further. Try being calm, ignoring the message, or sending a polite message asking for them to explain what they meant. It may have been a misunderstanding.

5. Avoid "crashing" discussion groups or forums.

People on the Net frequently get together online to talk about things they may have in common. This can be done on a listserv, a bulletin board, a chat group, etc. If you join the discussion just for the fun of "crashing" it, or ruining it, people will definitely get angry.

6. Respect the privacy of other people.

If someone tells you something secret, it should be kept secret. This includes passwords, full names, addresses, or interests. Sharing your own password with someone else, even someone you like, is never a good idea. Passwords and personal information are private, and are never safe to share with others.

7. Be responsible online.

When you are at the computer, you are in control. Avoid using the computer to harm other people. Taking things which are not yours (such as files, passwords, or credit card numbers), spreading rumors about other people online, and infecting other computers with viruses (on purpose) are examples of harming other people online.

8. Help other people learn more about the Net.

Chances are someone else taught you a lot of what you know about the Internet. The Net is growing quickly, and it's difficult to keep up. Other kids, or even your parents and teachers, may need help understanding what it's all about. Try to help them if you can. Who knows? They might show you a thing or two someday!

Videos:

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/180933-How-To-Follow-Proper-Netiquette-Rules> (Short video discussing general netiquette)

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/181084-How-To-Handle-a-Negative-Posting-About-Yourself>
(Short video giving ideas on how to respond to negative personal posts)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w4_Hrwh2XI (Short video showing unexpected consequences of posting personal information)