

Netiquette

(Revised from "A Guide to Etiquette on the Net", contributed by Maria Georgiou.)

1. Internet etiquette or netiquette guides us in proper behavior on the Internet. There are widely accepted rules of behavior to follow when you're online. It is very important to learn and follow these rules. Sometimes the online world can feel "pretend" because you cannot see the person with whom you are communicating. So, it is very important to remember that you are dealing with "real" people online and you should use your very best manners -- just as you would at home, work, or at school.
2. Do unto others, as you'd have others do unto you. Be polite and courteous at all times. Remember that you're not communicating with a computer screen, but with a human being who has thoughts and feelings just like you. So, always think of the person on the receiving end of your messages.
3. Do not TYPE ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS for emphasis. IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING. If you need to emphasize a word, use asterisks, like **this** or lines, like *_this_*.
4. Remember that the written word is hard to interpret. When you speak to someone, that person can hear the tone of your voice. If they can see you, they can take visual clues from your face and body to better understand your meaning. All of this is lost in text, and sometimes responses can come across as mean or rude, even when you did not intend them this way. This is the reason some people use emoticons (visual clues) in their e-mails, it saves a lot of confusion.
5. Do not to use rude or bad language online, ever. Some providers will terminate your account. Even if they will not terminate it, it is never acceptable to use bad language.
6. Don't break any laws. When you're on the net, follow the same rules of behavior that you would in any role in your life. Remember, if it is against the law in the physical world, it is against the law in cyberspace.
7. Be universal. Other users have different Web browsers, different online services, different e-mail programs etc. So don't, for example, send out e-mail with text formatting -- boldface, italics, indentations, etc. -- because many other programs will not be able to read the formatting and the recipients will receive your e-mail filled with muddled codes.
8. Be brief whenever possible. No one wants to read through a lot of unnecessary information. If you are replying to an e-mail, try editing out unimportant information and anything that is repeated.
9. Don't flame. Do not send rude, angry, or offensive e-mails or postings. It's bad manners and can get seriously out of hand (flame wars). So don't flame others and if you are flamed, do not respond: you will never win. If you are flamed in a forum or chat room, or if you receive hateful e-mail, report it to the moderator.

10. Identify yourself. If your employer, teacher, or parents require you to use an online name instead of your real one, that's fine - use your online name consistently. Never send e-mail without including your name at the bottom of the e-mail. Similarly, don't post forum messages without identifying yourself, this is seen as rude.

11. Make a good impression. Remember that the written word is the only way you can represent yourself online, so spelling and grammar count. If you are going to be writing a large amount of text for other people to see, make sure you break it up using paragraphs, it will make it easier on the eye for those that will read it.

12. Be patient with newcomers. Once you have become an Internet expert, it is easy to forget that you started out as a newbie too. Learning the rules of cyberspace is much like learning a new language; it takes practice, and includes making mistakes. So if you come across someone else's mistakes on the net, don't put them down, just politely point them in the right direction for guidance (send them a copy of these rules to get them started on their way!).

Things to remember about your e-mail account:

Check e-mail regularly... so you can respond quickly

Delete messages after you read them... frees up storage space for more productive use

Don't send confidential information in your mail... others may be able to read/access it

Don't be hasty when you send... if you write a message when you're upset, wait before you send it

Respect the privacy of others... don't share someone's email address without their permission

Always fill in the subject box so people can see what the mail concerns

Don't send chain letters... they're as annoying on the internet as they are in real life

Do not forward emails. They contain addresses and names of persons who may not want you to share them with others.

Do not forward hoaxes and urban myths. You may think you are doing others a favor, but this uses up resources and perpetuates nonsense. If you receive a message about a virus or a lost child or an award, check it on Snopes or some website dedicated to exposing e-myths.

Things to remember when participating in a discussion group:

Before asking or responding in a newsgroup, take the time to feel the group out

Stick to the topic of the discussion group

When quoting someone, use only the portion of the quote that is absolutely necessary

Avoid "flame wars"

Don't send personal messages to an entire newsgroup, use e-mail