



Internet + Etiquette = Netiquette

by

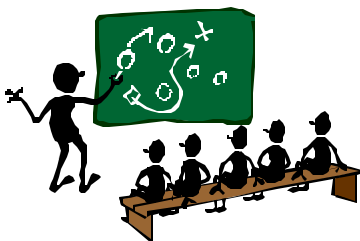
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Computer technology has brought about the age of the Internet and use of the World Wide Web. Email and “chat rooms” are primary ways in which many of us use the Internet. Certain communication rules, described as “**Netiquette**” have emerged to guide us through our journey in cyberspace.

Top Ten Netiquette Guidelines:

- 1) **Facilitate Accurate Interpretations** - Your message is reaching another individual. The computer interface offers anonymity that sometimes allows us to forget there are real people on the receiving end!! Be mindful that there are people reading and digesting your message. Imagine saying to them in person what you are writing in your message. Would you use the same words, the same expressions as you do in your email? Also, when you are communicating in person, you may utilize hand and facial expressions to make your point. Again, the computer interface interferes with that aspect of your communication as well. Make every effort to ensure that your words will not be misinterpreted by the receiver.
- 2) **Be Conservative** - Your messages may be saved and stored by one or more persons. Examine carefully the contents of what you send and to whom you send it. Emails may be collected to be used against you in a simple argument or in a serious lawsuit.
- 3) **Create Appropriate Communications** - There are simple rules of behavior and ethical standards that should be followed daily by everyone. The same basic rules apply when using the computer for communication. For example, when using email, the use of all capital letters is the equivalent of SHOUTING. Be sensitive to these types of issues to avoid miscommunication.
- 4) **Be Sensitive to Others’ Perceptions** - The simple act of thinking before speaking can translated, (in netiquette terms), to read and reread your message before sending. Imagine yourself on the receiving end of your message. Could your message be construed or interpreted in any way with a negative tone or nuance? If so, don’t send it.

- 5) **Conserve Time** - The web is a wonderful tool for conducting research. In order to save time and avoid needless questions and answers, make it a practice to seek out the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) area of your topic first. This technique also works well when you are joining a chat or discussion group. Scope out the nature and topic of discussion. Read the previous questions and responses before you jump in on the discussion. Your participation will be much more valuable if you do a little preparation up front.
- 6) **Consider Legal Implications** - Many materials on the web or shared in emails are protected by copyright law. Use caution when you are using materials found on the web to avoid violation of copyright law. Electronic larceny, defined as when one does not pay for programs or tools authored and created by other cyberusers, is a crime. Again, use good sense and ethical thinking to avoid these potential problem areas.
- 7) **Uphold Rights to Privacy** - What about the privacy issue? Just as you should not deliberately open someone else's mail, so should you not read someone else's email. In addition, it would be unethical to share or forward any such message without the express approval of the author.
- 8) **Minimize Junk Mail** - Spam is electronic junk mail. It is the unsolicited advertising of goods and services over the Internet. It is as unwelcome as the junk mail received at home, only more so, because it interferes and delays your communication while on the net. Do not support any use of Spam.
- 9) **Be Polite and Respectful** - If you choose to participate in a "chat room", be mindful of the courtesies afforded the other members. It is inappropriate to participate with comments that may hurt someone's feelings, or to make "flaming" (derogatory) statements. If you must reply in the negative, exercise restraint and make your point without "slamming" anyone.
- 10) **Use Communication Shortcuts** - There are many shortcuts in communication that "cyberusers" like to use. It would be a distinct advantage to learn the abbreviations that make communication more rapid. For instance, BTW stands for "By The Way, BRB means "Be Right Back", and so on.



Your team or discussion group may want to come up with some other guidelines to make your online communications even more effective.