

The Core Rules of Netiquette

Source: Shea, V. (1994). *Netiquette*. San Francisco: Albion Books.

At heart, Netiquette (etiquette for the Internet) is simple, good manners and business courtesy. Some of it may seem basic, but some infringements can result in major problems for others or can create an unintended insult to another user.

Rule 1. Remember the human

Be polite. Never mail or post anything you wouldn't say to your reader's face. Keep in mind the fact that although you are looking at a keyboard and a computer screen, there are real people with real feelings reading your words.

Be aware that the written word has different effects on the recipient than a spoken word. A hastily written response can come across as terse, insulting, and/or mean-spirited. This is the reason some people use emoticons such as :) :-) or ;) . Also, it's fine to use humor, but use it carefully. The absence of facial and vocal cues can cause humor to be misinterpreted as criticism or flaming (angry, antagonistic criticism). Feel free to use emoticons such as :) to let others know that you're being humorous.

Capitalize words only to highlight a point or titles—capitalizing otherwise is generally viewed as SHOUTING!

Rule 2. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.

Be ethical and don't break the law. Cite all quotes, references, and sources.

Rule 3. Know where you are in cyberspace.

Check the discussion frequently and respond appropriately and on subject/task.

Before you begin to post, spend some time reading previous posts to understand the tone and content of the discussion so far. In this way, you can avoid asking questions that have already been answered and contribute more intelligently when you do participate.

Rule 4. Respect other people's time and bandwidth.

When posting a long message, it's generally considered courteous to warn readers at the beginning of the message that it is a lengthy post.

Focus on one subject per message and use pertinent subject titles.

Rule 5. Make yourself look good online.

Check grammar and spelling before you post. Know what you're talking about and make sense. Identify yourself.

Never send an e-mail without including your name and contact information at the bottom of the e-mail. Similarly, don't post forum messages without identifying yourself.

Rule 6. Share expert knowledge

Offer answers and help to people who ask questions in discussion groups.

Rule 7. Help keep flame wars under control.

Don't flame others, and if you are flamed, don't respond. It's like arguing with a drunk at a football game: You will never win.

If you feel you've been flamed in a forum, make your complaint public to the entire forum. As much as possible, let's try to resolve conflicts as they occur and as a team. If you've posted flame-bait, or perpetuated a flame war, apologize.