



# Netiquette for online communications

## Quick guide for all users

There are some basic, commonsense guidelines for interacting in an online environment (called Net Etiquette, or Netiquette for short).

Just as you need to show courtesy and respect in the face-to-face classroom, this same behaviour is expected in the online classroom. However, when there are only words to interpret messages, you need to be especially careful in what you say – there is no voice tone or body language to help the ‘listener’ interpret your message. Here are some guidelines for communications conduct that you should follow.

## Some pointers (do’s and don’ts)

### Do’s

- Clearly indicate the subject of your message in the appropriate text box in the Message window.
- Create single subject messages wherever possible.
- Be polite – do address others by name, as appropriate.
- Make your messages easily read:
  - Keep your messages as succinct as possible – use short paragraphs, and short sentences (no more than 20 words).
  - Structure your message if necessary with bullet points, numbered lists, and/or use sub headings to break the text up into easily read chunks.

### Don’ts

- Refrain from making any rude, hurtful, sexist, racist or other disparaging comments.
- Respect other people’s ideas and perspectives – although feel free to share differences in opinion. If critical, apply it to the argument, not the person.
- Refrain from dominating the communications through prolific postings – give others space and ‘air time’.
- Don’t copy or forward a message or attachment (or parts within) without first getting the permission of the author.
- Beware of CAPITALISING or highlighting whole words or phrases – this seems like ‘shouting’ to the reader.
- Be careful in how you use wit, humour, irony or sarcasm – it can be easily misinterpreted without the usual voice tone and body language cues.

### Before you send

Before you hit the Send/Post button, think:

- Is this really what I want to say?
- How will this be interpreted by the reader(s)?
- Is this the best medium to send the message (e.g. use email or the journal for private/personal communication; Discussions, Blogs and Chat are public forums)?
- Am I comfortable that this will be a permanent electronic record?

Take the time to review your message and correct any errors in grammar or spelling that could mislead the reader.

If you do find a message hurtful or offensive, avoid escalating the matter publicly through the **Discussions** or **Chat** forum (this is called 'flaming'). Either contact the sender responsible privately (e.g. by email) or contact your unit coordinator.