

Netiquette

Email and More ~ Do's and Don'ts

It's easy enough to use electronic mail, but there is an art to communicating effectively on-line. Here are some simple guidelines and/or suggestions for telecommunicating:

- When writing email or posting messages, be brief. You can often fit everything you need to communicate in one screen of text.
- Be sure to include a descriptive title at the top of your text (in the subject line) so the reader will know what the message is about.
- Try to keep the length of lines in your email below 70 characters; short lines are easier to read, especially on a computer screen.
- Use blank spaces between paragraphs to break the text up for the eye.
- Use mixed upper and lower case and standard capitalization. Mixed-case text is much easier to read than all lower or all upper case; even worse, USING UPPER CASE WHEN YOU WRITE IS LIKE SCREAMING WHEN YOU SPEAK!
- Most computers do not display underlined, italicized, or bold characters, which are commonly used to provide emphasis in word processors. So, if you want to emphasize something you can use all-capital letters for what you REALLY want to emphasize. Another way to emphasize a word is to put *asterisks*, underlines, or special characters at the beginning and end of a word or phrase.
- Keep your paragraphs short; in general, fewer than fifteen lines should be about right.
- Avoid using special keys (like tabs), even if they seem to work fine while you are editing your mail document. Such special characters may alter the display of your message making it virtually unreadable on another person's computer.
- When writing email, begin your text with the name of the person to whom you are writing, just like you would begin a regular letter. Even though the person's name is in the mail header, starting your letter with their name makes your message seem more personal.
- If you are responding to someone else's email, you might want to include short, relevant passages from the original message. This will be useful to establish context, or give your email more of a conversational tone.
- Never forget that the person to whom you are sending mail is another human being, with feelings and beliefs that may be very different from yours! This can be easy to forget when you are writing someone you have never met in person, and since you may know very little about him or her.
- In face-to-face conversation, there are many subtle cues provided by body language and intonation that let us know how what we are saying is affecting the other person. These cues are completely absent when using online postings, so strive to be concise, clear, and polite in your writing, and flexible in your interpretation of other people's mail.
- Don't assume anything, read between the lines or jump to conclusions when reading an email.
- Since email does not contain physical cues, a number of conventions indicate that the previous statement is meant in a light-hearted or humorous way. Smileys, when looked at sideways, look vaguely like "stick drawings of human faces. There are hundreds of smileys that can be made with the basic characters of a keyboard, each of which conveys a slightly different meaning.

Here is a small audience of smileys to give you an idea:

:-) the basic smiley
;-) the winking smiley
:- a stern smiley
:-# my lips are sealed
:-& I'm tongue-tied
:-o I'm bored (yawn)

- End the text of your message with your name. Again this makes your mail or newsgroup-posting feel more personal to the reader.
- And finally, before sending off your e-mail message: Look over what you have written. Make sure you have said everything you needed to say. Make sure you haven't said things you didn't need to say. Make sure you have used correct spelling and grammar, but don't be overly concerned if a few typos have passed you by! Remember that there is spell check on emails.

Netiquette - 10 Simple Tips for Harmonious Online Communications!

1. **Emphasize using *Asterisks*. Capitalizing is termed as SHOUTING!**
2. **Keep your messages to the point and help keep discussions organized by adding to a relevant thread.**
3. **Always spell check your message, proofread for errors.**
4. **Use smileys to convey emotion/humor as they can let people know that your comment is friendly :-)**
5. **Respect other participants and disagree with them constructively.**
6. **Post constructive and useful messages (not just "I agree").**
7. **Behave as you would in a face-to-face discussion.**
8. **Do not post abusive messages.**
9. **Think about what you have written before you post it.**
10. **Finally, remember not everyone is well versed in the rules of netiquette, so don't punish them just gently educate them.**

Finally, what you email will be there forever and can be forwarded on to 1000's of people without you knowing. Be mindful of what you say in an email, you never know who might read it someday.