Netiquette

Scope
Netiquette defines the standards, guidelines, and protocols for interpersonal communication in online forums such as instant messenger chat, discussion boards, academic social media sites, and email. This document provides a series of best practices to create a robust, engaging and professionally styled online environment.

Introduction
According to a 2007 survey conducted by Office Team, HR.com, and the International Association of Administrative Professionals, 67% of HR managers preferred an applicant with strong soft skills. Respondents ordered the list of priorities as follows: organizational skills (87%), verbal communication (81%), teamwork/collaboration (78%), problem solving (60%), tact and diplomacy (59%), business writing (48%), and analytical skills (45%). A 2008 Job Outlook Survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers put communication ability at the top of the list (Klaus, 2011).

Technology increases communication speed and permanence. What may be taken as a joke in person may offend when written. Although most individuals view online communication – social network posts, chats, instant messaging, and discussion board posts as informal communication all of it is written down. Poor spelling, punctuation, and grammar convey a lackadaisical attitude at best and ignorance at worst. The words one chooses and they way those words fit together in an online environment give readers a picture of the author’s intellect, professionalism, attitude, and capability. In this regard, words serve the same function as a wardrobe in “offline” communication. It is how one “looks” to others. There is a difference between casual and sloppy.

General Guidelines
Virginia Shea created 10 rules for online communication in her book Netiquette. The book is available online at http://www.albion.com/bookNetiquette. Shea’s rules are as follows (Shea, 2004):

1. Remember the human – Most online communication excludes facial expressions, gestures, and voice intonation. Words are easily misinterpreted.

2. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life – treat your posts as interpersonal communication. If you would not say something in person, do not say it from the safety found behind the keyboard.

3. Know where you are in cyberspace. What works in one arena can fail in another.

4. Respect other people’s time and bandwidth – some people’s posts resemble a denial of service attack with more messages than necessary. Remember that you are not the center of cyberspace. Do not be surprised when others either disagree with your point of view or simply ignore it entirely. Be clear in what you say, but be brief.

5. Make yourself look good online – reach out to others and take advantage of your anonymity. Use this opportunity to engage people you might have avoided in person.

6. Share expert knowledge – A comedian said he finally ventured out onto Twitter, only to learn it is appropriately named. Although the cyber village offers
unprecedented access to knowledge, it remains equally accessible to fools. Keep your comments on topic. If you do not have information to share, consider asking poignant questions to enhance everyone’s understanding.

7. Help keep flame wars under control – flaming is the expression of a strong opinion without holding back any emotion. Aggressive debate works. Avoid personal attacks, name calling, and disparagement.

8. Respect other people’s privacy – Never post personal information in an open forum, especially someone else’s.

9. Don’t abuse your power – Some people have more power in cyberspace than others. Knowing more than others does not give you the right to take advantage of another person.

10. Be forgiving of other people’s mistakes – When someone makes a mistake, be kind about pointing it out publically.

Netiquette in the Academic Setting

Purpose
Online courses do not prohibit interpersonal communication. The medium simply changes the way individuals converse. Instead of on-ground meetings at set times during the week, online students enjoy a more flexible schedule. Discussion forums give students an opportunity to interact, build relationships, and increase knowledge through peer learning. The forums also introduce students to processes used by business, government, and not-for-profit agencies.

Proper Netiquette
Think before you post.

Is your post relevant to the topic? Is your point clear?
What does the post say about your academic abilities?
Did you avoid spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors?

Best Practices
• Prepare before you post – think about the topic; do some basic research; write qualified opinions. Tie the topic into the course material.
• Post relevant messages; do not take the discussion off-topic.
• Ask relevant questions and answer other student’s questions whenever possible.
• Be respectful of others. Aggressive debate is welcome, personal attacks are not.
• Use and cite authoritative sources. Failure to cite a source is plagiarism.
• Write clear sentences with correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
• Advance the conversation – simply stating that you agree/disagree is insufficient.
• Follow the guidelines in your instructor’s discussion post rubric.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Insufficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Post</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (primary)</td>
<td>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the related subject matter from the course; connects course concepts to outside material; applies course concepts to scenarios.</td>
<td>Shows a basic understanding of subject matter from the course; connects some concepts to outside material; fails to apply course concepts to scenarios.</td>
<td>Does not demonstrate an understanding of the material presented; fails to connect concepts to outside material; cannot apply concepts to scenarios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (secondary)</td>
<td>Clear identifies all issues, concepts, and problems from reading assignments; correctly applies formulas and correctly calculates data and shows all work; summarizes concepts from reading material by paraphrasing into original statements.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fails to identify key issues, concepts, and problems; misapplies formulas, fails to show work when calculating data; does not correctly calculate data; repeats reading material without sufficient paraphrasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reply</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the initial post; advances the discussion by presenting additional or contrary facts; supports arguments with research; gives clear, concise reasons for agreement or disagreement with initial respondent.</td>
<td>Presents a supporting or contrary argument without supporting facts; does not advance the discussion.</td>
<td>Simply states agreement or disagreement without sufficient support; reply deviates from the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses short quotations, facts, statistics, anecdotes, etc… from authoritative sources to support all points; paraphrases information and connects it with smooth transitions.</td>
<td>Quotes excessively long passages from sources or uses material from non-authoritative sources; does not use material from authoritative sources for all points.</td>
<td>Does not use sourced material or does not demonstrate an understanding of the material presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sourcing</strong></td>
<td>Properly cites sources used to support points within the</td>
<td>Fails to consistently cite sources; omits or</td>
<td>Omits citations or references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (primary)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (secondary)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourcing</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Late Policy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Timeliness penalty only applies in situations where the instructor agrees to accept a late assignment. Late assignments are not always accepted. When accepted, the minimum reduction shall be 10 points per day late up to a maximum of three days.

**Grading Scale**

- A 90-100
- B 80-89
- C 70-79
- D 60-69
- F < 60
Protocols
Additional guidelines

- Students must demonstrate an observable understanding of the material under discussion at the critical thinking and synthesis level.
- Discussion posts and replies shall maintain a professional tone and demeanor.
- Personal attacks, insults, and disparaging comments result in an automatic zero for the assignment.
- Students should use third person throughout their papers and write in active voice.
- Visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/ for help with APA style and formatting guidelines
- Visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/ for General Writing Resources

References
http://www.bettersoftskills.com/research