

Internet Etiquette (Netiquette)

Netiquette

Netiquette is the unofficial code on online conduct, or the basics of being a good cyber-citizen. None of the rules is law. If you miss a rule, the cyber police will not arrest you. But, like all forms of courtesy, netiquette is highly recommended.

- **Don't shout** — SOME PEOPLE LIKE TO TYPE A MESSAGE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, and others overuse capital letters FOR EMPHASIS! Use capital letters sparingly, only where appropriate.
- **Stay on topic** — When mailing or contributing to a discussion (mailing) group, stay on the topic of the list. If your message does not pertain directly to the mailing list's stated topic, start another topic (thread) or don't send the message.
- **Keep current** — Newcomers to a list or group, or people who only drop in occasionally, tend to ask questions that have already been asked and answered a dozen times. This annoys the regulars. Keep up with the conversation so you know what's going on. Read the FAQ (frequently asked question) list if one is available.
- **Don't use sarcasm** — An exaggerated message intended as sarcasm can be taken literally by those who read it, and confusion or arguments may arise.
- **Keep personal discussions personal** — If sending to a mailing group, be sure the message really interests the whole list.
- **Treat e-mail like a postcard** — E-mail messages are not necessarily meant to be long and detailed. When writing an e-mail message, think of what would fit on a postcard. Privacy may be an issue, so don't write anything that will cause a problem if seen by an unintended reader.
- **Don't over quote** — When replying, cut quotes down to what's necessary to show what you're replying to. When a series of replies builds up and no one cuts the quotes, each message can be pages long even if it contains only one new sentence.

Net etiquette

- **Don't shout** — Use capital letters sparingly.
- **Stay on topic** — If your message doesn't pertain to the topic, don't send it.
- **Keep current** — Read the FAQ before asking questions.
- **Don't use sarcasm** — Sarcasm can cause confusion in messages.
- **Keep personal discussions personal** — Be sure to take personal discussions to private e-mail and don't post them to the entire group.
- **Treat e-mail like a postcard** — Keep your messages short.
- **Don't over quote** — Include only what is necessary when replying to a message.
- **Write and spell well** — Write as you would when writing a letter.
- **Signature lines** — Keep signatures to a maximum of four lines.

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- **Write and spell well** — Do the readers the courtesy of writing whole words and complete sentences. Fix mistakes before you send a message.
- **Signature lines** — Keep signature lines to a maximum of four lines.
- **Beware of hoaxes** — If you receive e-mail or see information on the Internet, check it out before sending it on to others. There are many virus hoaxes and other misinformation on the Web. Do not perpetuate rumors.
- **Don't flame or counterflame** — A *flame* is an angry attack in a message, the kind that flares when a debate grows into a spat. Keep your cool. If you are flamed, don't rise to the bait. Flame wars only escalate, and no one ever wins.
- **Don't send unsolicited advertisements** — Under United States law, it is unlawful "to use any telephone facsimile machine, computer, or other device to send an unsolicited advertisement" to any "equipment which has the capacity to transcribe text or images (or both) from an electronic signal received over a regular telephone line onto paper." The law allows individuals to sue the sender of such illegal "junk mail" for \$500 per copy. Most states will permit such actions to be filed in small claims court. This activity is termed "*spamming*" on the Internet.

Creating Web Pages

Whether you visit Web pages or develop Web pages, several common items confuse and frustrate Web users:

- Large, slow-to-download graphics,
- Buttons or links that are difficult to use or hard to identify,
- Lengthy text that requires scrolling to find the buttons at the bottom of a page,
- Dark backgrounds that make the text hard to read and may not print,
- Pages too wide to read without scrolling,
- Pages that don't print properly,
- Pages with poor use of frames,
- Wild patterned backgrounds, and
- Dead-end pages.

Net etiquette, continued

- **Hoaxes** — Verify all virus rumors and check Web information. For more information on viruses and analyzing the accuracy of Web information, consult our publications *Computer Viruses* (PM-1789j) and *Analyzing Internet Information* (PM-1789b).
- **Don't flame or counterflame** — No one ever wins, so don't rise to the bait.
- **Do not send unsolicited ads** — It is illegal under U.S. law to send unsolicited advertisements over phone lines.

There are more than 66 million people connected to the Internet. By the year 2000, 200 million are expected to be connected.

When creating Web pages, keep these tips in mind.

- **Consider your target audience** — Put yourself on the receiving end of this Web site. What would you like to see? Keep your clients in mind and recognize that they may not necessarily have the newest, most powerful equipment to use. Many people cannot view JAVA, Active X, and other “cool stuff.”
- **Use graphics appropriately** — Graphics on the Web should accent the text or subject matter, illustrate a point, or serve a function of their own. They should not overwhelm or distract from the content or message of the page. Optimize graphics with a good image editing program. Keep graphics to a minimum and/or use “thumbnails” (smaller, lower-resolution versions of the original). Thumbnails can be linked to the full-size graphic.
- **Keep it simple** — Include basic information on your pages first. Then build on your site, adding features later. It’s better to have a little content that is accurate and up-to-date than to have volumes that are wrong and outdated.
- **Don’t duplicate effort** — If there is “good” material out there, link to it. Let others know when you link to or use their information, and give them credit for it.
- **Check your material** — Your Web pages might look great on your computer’s screen, but before publishing check them out on different browsers, different computers, and different platforms: Mac, Windows 3.1, Windows 95. Some of the “latest and greatest” pages can cause browser crashes under different circumstances.
- **Keep it up to date** — Old material (e.g., outdated text, pictures, and links) hurts your site’s credibility. Update text as necessary and test all links monthly. Fix any broken hyperlinks immediately — both internal and external ones.
- **Use good grammar and correct spelling** — Check, double check, and recheck your information. Have someone else proofread your work before going online.
- **Add navigation aids on every page** — Don’t require viewers to use their browser’s “back” button to get to other pages of your site. It’s frustrating when a user ends up at dead-end pages.

Web page design

- Consider your target audience.
- Use graphics appropriately.
- Keep it simple.
- Don’t duplicate effort.
- Check your material.
- Keep it up to date.
- Use good grammar and correct spelling.
- Add navigation aids on every page.

Studies indicate that older Internet users—those 35 to 54 years old—tend to put a priority on practical information such as news and business data.

— *Colorado State University
Cooperative Extension*

If you are visiting a Web site and find a page that does not “work” for you, notify the Web site manager. Most Web sites will have a feedback or e-mail link on at least one of the pages, which will allow you to give input on the design and content of the page.

Shorthand

Shorthand abbreviations are used to communicate a common phrase efficiently, to save space and typing. Some of the abbreviations are also common to everyday office “lingo,” such as ASAP (As Soon As Possible). Other commonly used online shorthand acronyms are shown below.

AAMOF	As A Matter of Fact
BTW	By The Way
BYKT	But You Know That
BBFN	Bye Bye For Now
CMIIW	Correct Me If I'm Wrong
EOL	End Of Lecture
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FITB	Fill In The Blank
FWIW	For What It's Worth
FYI	For Your Information
IBTD	I Beg To Differ
IMO	In My Opinion
IMHO	In My Humble Opinion
IOW	In Other Words
LOL	Laughing Out Loud
OTOH	On The Other Hand
ROTFL	Rolling On The Floor Laughing
TPTB	The Powers That Be
TYVM	Thank You Very Much

Smileys — Smileys are used to communicate the tone of a message—to add an emotional inflection. Smileys are sometimes called *emoticons*, or emotional icons. Even though many different smileys exist, some are obscure and listed very little. Listed below are *basic* smileys, the ones you’re most likely to see and use.

: -)	Smile
: -(Frown
; -)	Wink
: -O	Surprise
8 -)	Smile with glasses
: '-(Crying
: -D	Laughing
: -	Indifferent
: ->	Sarcastic
: -&	Tongue tied
: -c	Bummed out
> : -<	Mad

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