

Communication in Digital Media (Netiquette)

What Is Netiquette?

The Oxford Dictionary defines netiquette as “the rules of correct or polite behavior among people using the Internet” The term combines the syllable **net** (Internet) and the word **etiquette**. It was first used in the 1980s in a Usenet forum called net.jokes. The presence of insults and inappropriate material led to the need to set rules regulating user interaction.

Why Is It Important?

Particularly in the professional world, having cordial and friendly relationships and using digital media effectively are of the utmost importance. Netiquette aims to help build those relationships, display a professional demeanor, and understand which platforms are the most appropriate for communicating across networks.

What Are the Main Rules of Netiquette?

Generally speaking, the following statements contain the core communication principles in digital media:

1. Remember that you are dealing with human beings. Never say anything online that you would not say face to face. Additionally, keep in mind that online interactions are almost always recorded and backed up, making them easy to share. If you misbehave, these recordings could negatively impact your future.
2. Consider the communication dynamics of the platform you are using and behave accordingly. What you share on WhatsApp may not be appropriate for an email.
3. Behave ethically. Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you.

Here are some concrete practices to help you cultivate effective and successful communication:

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- Take care of your digital image. Make sure that your message is understandable, and check grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Avoid abusing exclamation points and question marks and writing every word in capital letters—this is the equivalent of yelling in digital media.
- Express yourself in a cordial manner. Start a conversation by greeting and say goodbye at the end. Avoid sarcasm, insults, and derogatory remarks.
- Be brief in your interactions and limit messages to what is strictly necessary. Consider that by sending a digital message, you are using the recipient’s time.
- Be mindful of the size of the files you send. Remember that Internet servers’ storage and processing capacity are limited.
- Avoid and report cyberbullying. Do not spread rumors, lies, memes, or hurtful jokes about anyone.
- Respect the privacy of others. Do not share personal information or photographs of third parties without their permission. Try to communicate within working or school hours.
- Include the necessary information to provide context to your message. For example:
“What time tomorrow?”

vs.

“What time and place should we be at for tomorrow’s conference?”

- Share only verified information from reliable sources. Avoid forwarding sensational and unfounded information.
- In general, use instant messaging to ask questions or share short messages. If you want to record communications, store and manage institutional information, and include third parties in official communications, use an email.

To Learn More

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