

## Netiquette

The Core Rules of Netiquette are drawn from the book *Netiquette* by Virginia Shea.

### *Rule 1: Remember the Human*

When you communicate through cyberspace -- via email or on discussion groups -- your words are written. And chances are they're stored somewhere where you have no control over them. In other words, there's a good chance they can come back to haunt you. Ask yourself, "Would I say this to the person's face?" If the answer is no, rewrite and reread.

### *Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life Be ethical.*

If you encounter an ethical dilemma in cyberspace, consult the code you follow in real life. Chances are you'll find the answer.

### *Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace*

When you enter a domain of cyberspace that's new to you, take a look around. Spend a while listening to the chat or reading the archives. Get a sense of how the people who are already there act. Then go ahead and participate. Lurk before you leap

### *Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth. You are not the centre of cyberspace*

It's easy to forget that other people have concerns other than yours. So don't expect instant responses to all your questions, and don't assume that all readers will agree with -- or care about -- your passionate arguments. Bandwidth is the information-carrying capacity of the wires and channels that connect everyone in cyberspace. We're not all on high speed lines. Warn people in the subject line, if your message is more than two or three short paragraphs. Think carefully: Are these words and attached files really essential to the discussion? Are attached files under 50K in size?

Before you copy people on your messages, ask yourself whether they really need to know. If the answer is no, don't waste their time. If the answer is maybe, think twice before you hit the send key.

### *Rule 5: Make yourself look good online. Know what you're talking about and make sense*

As in the world at large, most people who communicate online just want to be liked. Networks, particularly discussion groups, let you reach out to people you'd otherwise never meet. And none of them can see you. You won't be judged by the colour of your skin, eyes, or hair, your weight, your age, or your clothing. Be pleasant and polite. Don't use offensive language, and don't be confrontational for the sake of confrontation. Check your facts, your spelling and your grammar before you send.

### *Rule 6: Share expert knowledge*

Don't be afraid to share what you know. It's especially polite to share the results of your questions with others. When you anticipate that you'll get a lot of answers to a question, or when you post a question to a discussion group that you don't visit often,

it's customary to request replies by email instead of to the group. When you get all those responses, write up a summary and post it to the discussion group. That way, everyone benefits from the experts who took the time to write to you.

*Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control*

"Flaming" is what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back any emotion. Tact is not its objective. And that's fine in isolation, but don't perpetuate flame wars – a series of angry postings can dominate the tone and destroy the camaraderie of a discussion group. They also unfairly use up bandwidth

*Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy Don't read other people's email*

Of course, you'd never dream of going through your colleagues' desk drawers. So naturally you wouldn't read their email either. Be aware though that failing to respect other people's privacy is not just bad Netiquette. It could also cost you your job.

*Rule 9: Don't abuse your power*

Knowing more than others, or having more power than they do, does not give you the right to take advantage of them.

*Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes*

So when someone makes a mistake, whether it's a spelling error or typing error, a stupid question or an unnecessarily long answer, be kind about it. If it's a minor error, you may not need to say anything. Even if you feel strongly about it, think twice before reacting. Give people the benefit of the doubt.

**Remember:** If you do decide to inform someone of a mistake, point it out politely, and do so using private email rather than the public (online) forum.