

Netiquette (Net + Etiquette)

Student guidelines for communicating in online contexts

This document provides brief guidance on appropriate ways of interacting with your classmates, teaching assistants, and instructors in online contexts. It applies to email, online discussion groups, live classes/seminars and online chats.

The W.R.I.T.E. Way to Communicate in Online Discussion

“The WRITE way involves communicating online in a manner that is (W)arm, (R)esponsive, (I)nquisitive, (T)entative, and (E)mpathetic.”



Warmth

“Being warm online is a way of reminding others (and you) that it is people who are engaged in communication, not software”



Responsive

“Try to return personal messages as soon as possible and set up a regular rhythm of communication for other responses.”



Inquisitiveness

“Defensiveness is reduced if people ask questions rather than make statements.”



Tentativeness

“A question – framed in a tentative manner – reduces defensiveness and can also contribute valuable information (e.g., ‘Don’t you think it’d be better if we . . .’).”



Empathy

“. . . put yourself in the shoes of your audience.”



Treat others with respect

- Use your instructor's proper title, such as "Dr." or "Professor." Don't call instructors by their first names unless they have invited you to do so.
- Use the preferred names of your classmates. If someone signs their name as "Melanie," don't address them as "Mel" in your response.
- For those individuals who have indicated preferred pronouns (such as "he," "she," or "they"), use those preferred pronouns when referring to them.
- Do your part to maintain a professional environment. For example, if your instructor has you use an online tool where you can make up your own username, don't create a username that is silly or offensive.
- Be respectful of other's opinions. Being open to new perspectives is one of the objectives of academic discussions. However, if someone writes something that you think is genuinely offensive or hateful, immediately draw it to your instructor's attention.
- Before you write something, ask yourself: "Would I say this out loud in class?" If not, don't write it.
- If you're angry about something, wait a day (to cool off) before you communicate with the person or persons who've angered you. This is a good idea in the real world, too!



Expectations and Guidelines for Interacting in the Online Environment

The following guidelines should be followed each time you interact in the course to ensure your interactions are respectful and professional:

1. In all your interactions, remember that **there is a person behind the written post**, who has feelings and can be hurt by what and how you interact with him or her.
2. It is easier to say something online when you do not have to look the person in the eye, so **never post anything that you would not say to the person face-to-face**.
3. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life, which includes **acting ethically and following rules and regulations**. If you would not steal in real life, then you should not steal online by taking other people's ideas and using them as your own.
4. **Respect other people's time and bandwidth:**
 - a) Take time to **understand the requirements of the discussion**.
 - b) **Refrain from disagreements** that lead to personal attacks.
5. **Make yourself look good online:**
 - a) Take time to check your **spelling and grammar**.
 - b) **Prepare for discussions** prior to engaging in them.
 - c) Refrain from **inappropriate language and remarks**.
6. Share your knowledge by **offering help** to learners who have questions.
7. Help keep flame wars under control by **not posting flames** and **not responding to flames** – **keep discussions professional**.
8. **Forgive other learners' mistakes** and **be patient** and compassionate of all learners in the course.



Chat Protocol

- **Allow each learner to complete his/her thought before responding**—this means do not interrupt or intrude with your thought while another is speaking.
- **Be patient;** not everyone has advanced keyboard skills.
- **Avoid having side conversations;** it's rude not to pay attention.
- **Signal when you've finished a statement** [some use a happy face :) to signal they have completed their input].
- **Signal when you don't understand something;** use a question mark to get the facilitator's attention.
- **Signal your "reactions" by using an exclamation mark (!)** for surprise or a sad face for disagreement :(or some combination of symbols.
- **Do not shout** [CAPITALS MEAN THAT YOU ARE SHOUTING].
- **Officially sign on and off** so that everyone knows when you are present.
- **Keep statements brief and to the point;** the chat box has a limit of 256 characters per statement; you can keep talking but in spurts.
- **Prepare notes and key ideas ahead of time** so that you can engage in the discussion without trying to figure out how to word your statements.

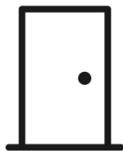
5 Steps to Good Practice for Online Classes

Time, Space, Dress, Camera, Question

Studying online presents a new set of challenges that lecturers and students are still getting used to. Your lecturer may give you more specific instructions for how to engage with sessions but we recommend you consider these five aspects before your online class:



Time. Be punctual. Sign on around **10-15 minutes** before the scheduled start time so you have chance to solve any technical issues and are ready to take notes when the class begins; it's hard to catch up if you log on when the class is in full swing.



Place. Try to find somewhere quiet and comfortable (and with good internet reception!) to access your live classes. It can be a good idea to tell the people you live with when you have a class, so they know that you're doing something important and do n't want to be disturbed. Be aware of your surroundings. You might want to remove personal items from the area (e.g. photos, household items) before starting the session.



Dress. It's tempting to stay in your pyjamas if you're attending a class in your bedroom. But you'll be able to focus better if you're fully dressed and ready for the outside world.



Camera. Mute your mic and keep your camera on if possible. This helps put names to faces and gauge reactions to the class content. The class will be more interactive - and it is more fun when you can see your classmates. Most importantly, *you* will be more focused and engaged if you have your camera on.



Question. Ask questions early - don't be afraid to be the first! Two ways to ask questions: Use the 'Raise Hand' function before speaking and wait for your name to be called.

Chat: The chat is a resource study like the lecture so your contributions should always be: *Relevant*. Relate your question directly to what has been said. *Respectful*. Be polite – even in disagreement. *Positive*. Keep your contribution light and upbeat. Complaints or anxieties are better expressed privately. *Inclusive*. Address your question to the whole chat, not just the lecturer or a particular person.