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Basics of Email Netiquette

**E-guide on social interaction and communicating electronically**

# Internet Communication

Communicating clearly without creating misunderstandings is a challenge—even more so when communicating over the internet.

# One problem is that you don't have any facial expressions, body language, or environment to help express yourself.

# Another is that there is little "give and take" for developing what you mean to say or are discussing.

# Main Guidelines

These guidelines hopefully will help you.

* **Be clear.**  
  Make sure the subject line (email) or title (webpage) reflects your content.   
  If you’re emailing an instructor, include the course and section information.
* **Use appropriate language.**  
  Use a salutation to greet the person.  
  If you have any question about whether you are too emotional, don't send the message. Save it as a draft, review it later, and decide when you’re in a better head space.
  + Remember: no one can guess your mood, see your facial expressions, etc.  
    All they have are your words, and your words can express the opposite of what you feel.
  + Don't use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS—it’s the equivalent of shouting or screaming.
* **Be brief.**  
  If your message is short, people will be more likely to read it. Try to write as concisely as possible—stick to the basics and the facts.
* **Make a good impression.**  
  Your words and content represent you; review/edit your words and images before sending.
* **Be selective.**Choose carefully what information you put in an email or on a website.  
  Information on the Internet is very public and can be seen by anyone in the world, including criminals, future employers, and governments.
* **Sign your emails.**Include contact information (phone number) if necessary.

# Additional Guidelines

* **Get permission.**  
  Only forward email messages you receive if you have permission from the sender.
* **Remember that you are not anonymous.**  
  What you write in an email and/or website can be traced back to you.
* **Consider others.**  
  Don’t write something to others that you wouldn’t want someone to write to you.  
  If you are upset by what you read or see on the Internet, remember that person is a human, too. Forgive bad spelling or harmless mistakes.  
  If you think it violates the law, forward it to the FBI or your state's Attorney General.
* **Obey copyright laws.**  
  Don't use others' images, content, etc. without permission from the author/owner.  
  Don't forward email or use website content without permission.  
  Visit the Library of Congress' Guide on [Copyright Basics](https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/copyright/) for students and teachers.
* **Cite others' work you use.**  
  Refer to the style guides from the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html) (OWL).
* **Use distribution lists appropriately.**Be sure to get permission to share email addresses or use the blind carbon copy (bcc) field to keep email addresses private. Beware of sending too many emails to distribution lists.
* **Do not send spam.**Spam is posting or emailing unsolicited email, often advertising messages, to a wide audience (another way of thinking of it is electronic junk mail).
* **Don't forward chain letters.**  
  If you receive one, try to avoid opening it. Mark it as junk/spam and block the sender.
* **Don't respond to "flames" or personal attacks.**  
  Contact your webmaster for action and referral.  
  If it happens in class and comes from another student, contact your instructor.