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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](#) for students and teachers.
- **Cite others' work you use.**
Refer to the style guides from the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) (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.