

Sample Netiquette Discussion Forum Guidelines

Netiquette guidelines address communication behaviors that are particular to an online environment. Below are some general netiquette guidelines for online discussion boards.

- **Be inclusive.** It is important to be intentional about making sure we “see” each other in an online community. You can do this by making sure that everyone has at least one response.
 - **Tip:** If you are unsure who to respond to, try looking for posts that have not yet received a reply. Also, be sure to reply back to people who post questions or comments to you.
- **Be on time.** Your contributions to our discussions are important, but our learning community will not benefit from them unless you post on time.
 - **Tip:** Set calendar reminders to make sure you contribute on time.
- **Disagree respectfully.** Disagreement and different ideas are essential parts of learning, problem-solving, and creativity. However, in order for different ideas to be heard and shared, it is important to maintain a respectful stance even through vehement disagreement; otherwise communication may break down.
 - **Tip:** You might start the conversation with a question to clarify or get more information before you explain your different perspective. For example, “Nathan, can you tell me more about what you meant when you said that recycling programs are a poor use of public resources?”
 - **Tip:** Refrain from using judgmental evaluations of what someone posted, and instead present your own perspective supported by factual information. For example, instead of “Jamal, your analysis makes no sense,” you can say, “Jamal, I interpreted the results of the study differently. As I see it, there was no statistically significant difference in the children’s test scores, which implies that the new program is not working.”
- **Be concise.** Lengthy paragraphs are difficult for readers to digest. Keep your paragraphs short and your writing concise.
 - **Tip:** Consider using bullet points to help highlight your main points or headings if your post needs to be lengthy.
- **Stay on topic.** Off-topic comments can derail our conversation. You can post off-topic comments in our open discussion forum or one of the other communication modes we are using in the course.
- **NO YELLING.** When you write in uppercase letters in online communication, it is usually interpreted as yelling.
- **Add some emotion. :-)** Sometimes it helps communicate the tone of your message when you add an emoticon. However, only do so as necessary for it can also be annoying to readers if you use too many (which is probably the opposite of your intention).
- **Use humor carefully.** Sarcasm in particular does not translate well in an online environment. It is best to avoid the potential pitfalls of misunderstood messages.