

Net etiquette or netiquette for Internet Communications

Advice	Rationale
Quote original email if replying	If replying to a message, quote part or all of the message or the relevant parts of the message so your reply is put into context of previous discussion.
Use one subject per message and use meaningful and accurate subject titles	Subject titles on messages help users skim through the volume of mail they receive. To keep conference discussions on track, use the same subject title of the original message, unless you change the topic significantly. Also, limit each message to the subject specified in the title.
Always sign your email	Identifying the sender from the message header is often difficult. Sign all email with your name, organization, and email address. This allows people to contact you, no matter where your message is forwarded. Signatures also help the receiver feel safe about opening any attachments.
Warn of long messages	Readers should be warned if a post is over a page or so, e.g., "long message" or "20 pages follow." This allows users to mark the message to read later.
Warn of cross-posting	If you post a message to several lists, indicate at the beginning which lists will receive the post so that readers will know to avoid the message on the other lists once they read it.
Separate personal email from conferences	Sending personal email to someone via a conference is rude and may cost some conference members who pay for Internet access by the amount of time on-line. Also, always get permission to forward a personal email message to someone else or to a conference.
Avoid flaming	Flames are messages intended to provoke a response or hostile reaction in the recipient or others. Small provocations can easily get out of hand with email and are difficult to correct.
DO NOT USE CAPS	Text in all capital letters is hard to read and suggests SHOUTING.
Check out conference FAQs and keep instructions	When you join a conference, see if a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) file exists, so you do not ask questions that have been answered repeatedly by others. A rule of thumb is to read 2 weeks of postings, then follow the norms.
Make messages meaningful	Messages such as "me too" typically do not add anything to the conversation, are unnecessary, and require others to do extra work to read and delete them.
Keep instructions and separate types of messages	Keep initial conference messages explaining how the conference works. They explain the address for sending email to subscribers and the address for changing a subscriber's status. They are especially important because email addresses change and unsubscribing with an outdated address is difficult. A frequently annoying message in conferences is "tell me how to get off this list."
Use formatting to enhance readability	Terminal screens read differently from the printed text. Help readability by formatting. For example, separate paragraphs with a blank line.
Stick to facts and try not to interpret emotions	Email carries few emotional cues. People can easily become offended by misinterpreting email. Try to state opinions without attacking others' positions. Be very clear when using subtle humor, sarcasm, or irony.
Assume all email is public	Email often becomes public due to reasons such as inaccurate addressing or forwarding. Use the telephone or another media for private communications.
Wait a day to send a hostile message	It is very easy to fire off a hostile email or reply. You might compose the email while angry to keep your upset tone, but hold off on sending the email for a day when your judgment is not influenced by your anger.

Adapted from: Schoech, D. (1999) Human Services Technology. NY: Haworth Pres, .p. 325