



STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

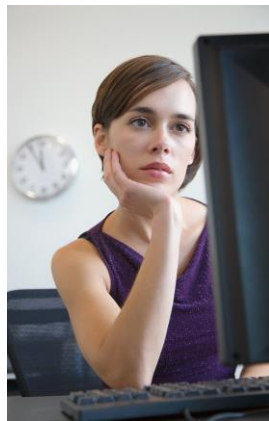
No. 19

Ways of 'speaking' online

In conversations with friends, work colleagues, lecturers and others, we will often use different words and tone of voice to suit the people or situation (purpose and audience). How we might describe to our friends what we did on the weekend could sound very different if we are having a similar conversation with a work colleague or university lecturer. How we shape our ways of communicating with others is also influenced by the medium we are using.

Netiquette

Netiquette is the name given to the way we communicate with and behave towards others when using the web. At the most basic level it is about treating others as you would have them treat you when it comes to commenting on work, social or personal matters and beliefs.



There are some commonly accepted rules and guidelines for using online communication tools at university. An overview of Curtin's expectation for appropriate Web behaviour may be found on the weblink:

<http://oasis.curtin.edu.au/help/general/netiquette.cfm>

Below are listed some simple ways to ensure that you have positive experiences when using the web.

Things to keep in mind

- Before sending any message, comment or request, imagine yourself to be the person receiving what you are saying. If the feeling is a negative one, think again before you send it. Consider carefully how others might interpret what you are saying; is their understanding likely to be the same as yours?

- Is your communication with others or your use of information in any way a breach of someone's privacy, or an inappropriate use of their intellectual property? Remember that whatever you send may go to many people other than those to whom you intended. Is what you are sending legal? Would you feel OK about sending it to your family or employer? If not, don't!
- In discussion groups or online chat forums it is wise to remember that many people will see what you say and view it through the lens of their cultural, religious, and social beliefs or their world view.
- Not everyone wants to engage in long discussions or read extensive personal comments. Be succinct and to the point in your comments. In an email it helps to list different points separately as bullet points. People tend to scan or read online communications very quickly.
- Overall, it is important to be a good web citizen by being courteous in your interaction with others, since you do not have all the visual cues of a face-to-face conversation. You cannot see how someone is reacting to what you might think is good humour and you could, unintentionally, cause offence. When responding to online discussions or exchanges, keep to the point and strive to understand and respect other people's point of view - even when they disagree with you.



- Tone is very important in online communication. If you are writing messages to a friend, you might feel comfortable in using a very relaxed manner of writing. It is important, however, not to be too relaxed or familiar with people you do not know well or with whom you only have a professional/working relationship (for example, with your lecturer or employer). This means that your choice of words is especially important. Sometimes, because people may be under pressure at work and an email may be sent in a hurry, it can sound very curt and abrupt. You need to re-read your online postings before you send them to ensure that they do not give the wrong impression.
- Email and online comments should never contain swear words or any potentially offensive language such as slang or derisive expressions that might be hurtful from a cultural, linguistic or religious perspective. Similarly, if you are emailing a lecturer, you should use a more formal style than you would with a friend. All emails to your lecturer should generally be regarded as formal communication.
- When text messaging we might use symbols or abbreviated words and numbers like C U L8R (see you later). These are generally **not** appropriate if writing to your lecturer; nor are short forms such as *pls* and *thanx*.

Other points to keep in mind

- Avoid sending emails with no subject heading. The receiver may think it is spam mail and delete your message unread!
- Be very careful with the *cc* (openly acknowledged copy to other recipient) or the *bcc* (secret copy to other recipient) and the *reply to all* buttons! Mistakes in this area can cause a lot of embarrassment to you and others!
- Avoid using capital letters unless you feel it is really necessary. In online communication, capitals are interpreted as “shouting” at the recipient.

Managing your communications – record keeping

- Much of our daily communication with friends and colleagues may be informal. However, it is wise to keep a record of all written communication that relates to work and study matters so that you can, if necessary, track conversations and date events or decisions made with others.
- Email systems automatically keep track of received and sent mail, but usually require you to “archive” older documents. Avoid the temptation to delete such materials; instead save them to back up files. This can be simply done with storage devices or by using a Word document as a text (cut and paste) repository when using email systems that do not allow “save as” functions.
- When using online learning management systems such as Blackboard, it is useful to open a blank Word document into which you can paste all of your discussion group and chat room postings. This will act as a record of any communications that you might later wish to use to support your conversations about assignments and the like.

Find out more at the CBS Academic Communication Development website:

<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 20. Sending the Right Message*.

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