

Netiquette Guide

Network etiquette (commonly known as **netiquette**) is the ‘golden rules’ or the do's and don'ts of online communication. These guidelines have been designed to help you make the most of your online learning at The University of the South Pacific.

1. Remember the human

Communicating online is different from communicating face-to-face. You don't have the luxury of gestures, the tone of your voice or facial expressions to support you – you only have words. However, if you organise yourself well you may find the discipline of online discussions more productive than many face-to-face situations. Be respectful to your fellow students. Before you respond to a posting think to yourself – would you say it to their face? If no, then you need to edit your posting. As a rule -- *always review what you have written before you send it*.

2. Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life

Be sensitive to the rich and diverse, multi-cultural community in which you are participating. Do not lower your own ethical/personal behaviour standards just because you are in cyberspace. You must never belittle, harass, or vilify other students. Please avoid any language or behaviour that could be construed to be—offensive toward others including cyber-bullying. In an academic environment, racist, sexist, and homophobic comments are unacceptable, as are derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory, and/or sarcastic comments and jokes. Some conversational language, humour and common idioms may not mean the same things to others. Don't type messages in all caps – it looks like you're SHOUTING! If you come across any inappropriate behaviour or postings in your course you must notify your course lecturer.

3. Know where you are in cyberspace

Not all online discussion groups are the same. What might be perfectly acceptable in one forum may not be appropriate in another. The Moodle discussion forum in your course has its own rules. For example, some text language or emoticons might be acceptable in some unmoderated discussion forums but not in moderated ones. Texting linguistics and shortcuts are not part of the scholarship and academic engagement, so, be careful with the use of emoticons, extra exclamation points, and extra question marks to show your meaning or emotion. English is the principal language of instruction at USP, therefore, all online communication needs to be in English, unless your course lecturer states otherwise. You will need to find out what your course lecturer finds acceptable, especially if your discussion is to be assessed.

4. Respect other people's time and bandwidth

Keep messages brief and relevant to the context of the discussion. Use informative subject headings while making a new discussion forum post. If your course lecturer had asked you to reply in a specific discussion forum thread please do so, don't start a new thread or use other discussion forum threads instead. Don't post multiple copies of the same response to different discussion threads in the same discussion forum. Many students have limited internet access and connectivity so be mindful of large attachments, images and videos. Opening new threads or attachments can be time-consuming so make it worthwhile for the reader.

5. Make yourself look good online

When participating in online discussions, you will be judged on your ability to express yourself effectively in writing. Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation use and sentence structure are expected in every other writing activity associated with scholarship and academic engagement including online discussions. Pay attention to the content of your message and make sure you have researched your material well so that you know what you are talking about. Make sure that your argument is clear and logical. Keep it simple – be polite — you want to avoid creating any potential misunderstandings. Review your written posts and responses to ensure that you've conveyed exactly what you intended. This gives you an opportunity to practice your proofreading, revision, and rewriting skills. *You can seek academic writing assistance from your Faculty Student Learning Specialist.*

6. Acknowledge your sources

If your contribution to the online discussion includes the intellectual property (authored material) of others, e.g., books, newspaper, magazine, journal article or open educational resources, give the acknowledgement and cite your sources and do not plagiarise. Do not share information that you do not have copyright permission for. Please refer to USP's Regulations Governing Copyright, Copyright Compliance Guidelines, and the Student Academic Integrity Regulations available at <http://policylib.usp.ac.fj/>. *You can seek academic writing assistance from your Faculty Student Learning Specialist.*

7. Help keep flame wars under control

Flaming (the posting of strongly held opinions that may be deliberately provocative) is a long-standing network tradition. However, flaming as part of your studies will not be accepted. Flame wars may be amusing at first but they can become boring quickly and do not contribute constructively to your learning environment. Avoid offending others and inform your course lecturer if you see it happening.

8. Respect other people's privacy

Respecting other people's privacy is good netiquette so be careful about the content of your messages and postings. Don't forward sensitive information to others without the writer's permission. Your course discussion forums are learning spaces you need to be sensitive about what you and your fellow students contribute. You might want to think of using a direct email or private message instead if you want to address a comment to an individual rather than the whole group.

9. Be humble and forgiving of other people's mistakes

When you have more experience with online discussion forums than others, please give them a helping hand. Show your fellow classmates a good example, and they will appreciate it! Try not to show off or make fun of other students by humiliating them publicly (especially spelling mistakes). Inform them privately if they have done something that is a real no-no.

10. Prepare well for online web-conferencing

When participating in an online web-conferencing session, it's important to take steps to safeguard your privacy and the privacy of others. This includes being appropriately dressed, taking care in positioning yourself so your background is appropriate for the context, and avoid movements and gestures during the session that could be distracting for you and others.

11. Report technical issues

Technology can break. If for any reason you experience difficulty in accessing and participating in Moodle, please email moodlehelp@usp.ac.fj, or otherwise inform your course lecturer of the issue so that it can be resolved as soon as possible.

This guide has been adapted from:

- Netiquette guide, The University of Newcastle. Available from: https://www.newcastle.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/191819/Netiquette_guide_august08.pdf. *Permission to re-use was granted by the Associate Director of the Learning Design & Teaching Innovation section, The University of Newcastle on 13th March 2020.*
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- Shea, V. (2005). The core rules of netiquette. Available from: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>
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