Netiquette Guide for Online Courses

Netiquette provides some basic guidelines about how to behave online to reduce online misunderstandings and miscommunications. Communicating in an online course is not the same as chatting or sending text messages to friends on social media sites.   You should conduct yourself in an online class with the same politeness and professionalism as in a real-life classroom.

1. No All Caps

TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS INAPPROPRIATE. Most readers tend to perceive it as shouting and will have a hard time taking what you say seriously, no matter how intelligent your response may be. If you have vision issues, there are ways to adjust how text displays so you can still see without coming across as angry.

2. Be Polite

Be polite in all communications. Be careful when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken literally or offensively. Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons as not everyone knows how to interpret them.

Online communication comes with a level of anonymity and can lead to behaving rudely when students disagree with one another. Make a point to be kind and respectful in your comments—even more so if you disagree with someone.

3. Address your professor properly

Always use your professors' proper title: Dr. or Prof., or if you're in doubt use Mr. or Ms.   Unless specifically invited, don't refer to professors by first name. Treat your instructor(s) with respect, even in email or in any other online communication.

4. Stop … grammar time!

Always make an effort to use proper punctuation, spelling and grammar. Trying to decipher a string of misspelled words with erratic punctuation distracts from the point of your message.

5. Submit files the right way

Online course instructors often establish ground rules for file assignment submissions, like naming conventions that help them keep things organized or acceptable file formats. Ignoring these instructions is a common example of bad netiquette. If you don't follow instructions, you're taking the risk that your instructor won't be able to find or open your assignment. Read instructions carefully before submitting.

6. Think before you type

Before you put any comment or information online think about what you are sharing. Would you share the same in a crowded room? A passing comment spoken in class can be forgotten a few minutes later, but what you share in an online classroom is part of a permanent digital record. It is good practice to be guarded when it comes to sharing personal information.

7. Be kind and forgiving

Humor can cause misguided arguments online, as it can be incredibly difficult to understand the commenter's intent. Be forgiving of others who try to joke online as their intent may not be to be rude.