

Top Five Rules of Netiquette in an Online Course

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Be prepared to communicate effectively when taking an online course. Following these simple netiquette rules in your online class or education environment will ensure your success!

with the onset of the online education environment and the expansion of courses offered in the online setting, a new buzzword has evolved called netiquette. Simply defined, it means etiquette on the Internet (or net).

In an online course you will have your communication skills tested! You will be speaking through writing both to fellow students and instructors, so it is imperative to communicate well and professionally.

Let's look at five important netiquette rules in an online course:

1. Be Friendly, Positive and Self- Reflective

When people cannot see you, and also do not know you, feelings can be hurt if you are not careful in how you express yourself. The old saying, think before you speak is important here. Think before you write. One word of advice is, do not respond when you feel angry. Wait. Write it down somewhere and come back to it. When you do, you may find that you no longer feel the same way as you did when you wrote it, because you have had time to reflect about the situation. Last, if you still feel the need to be heard, then edit before you post, and write it in terms that are easily embraced. This is also true when you feel a critique is necessary; say it in a positive tone. Reread what you have written to be sure it is positive.

2. Use Proper Language and Titles

Do not use slang or even profane words in an online education environment, even if they are words you consider, "not so bad," as they will sound offensive to the reader. Do not refer to your professor as "Doc" or by his or her first name, unless it is acceptable with him or her to do so. Also, do not use caps lock when typing. It will insinuate yelling. That would hurt someone's feelings and possibly give him (or her) the wrong impression of you.

3. Use Effective Communication

Say what you mean to say. This takes practice and thoughtful writing. Try to speak and write clearly at all times. Again, reread before you respond. Define and restate your words when necessary. Correct a misunderstanding right away. Chances are, if one person felt a certain way about what you said, another may have as well. Likewise, be mindful of chosen words and joking. Let's say for example, I write, "get out!" This slang term can be interpreted in several ways, either positively or negatively.

4. Professionalism

Leave the characters like smiley faces, and instant message abbreviations out. Your friends may like it, but chances are your professor will not. Save it for personal conversations or definitely ask for permission before using them. They may be interpreted as childish or too casual for the online education environment. Last, always say please and thank you.

5. Ask for Clarification

If you are unsure of what was said, or the instructor's directive, or are trying to interpret a person's expressions, then ask again. Do not sit in silence either misunderstanding or feeling offended. Do not interrupt though; wait until there is a break in the conversation, or until the open interaction occurs. Your instructor will appreciate your responsiveness and maturity. A simple way to do this is to say (or write), "I did not understand...", which will always keep the onus for the misunderstanding on yourself.

The Golden Rule of Netiquette

With these top five netiquette rules, you are on your way to a great grade in your online course. Most importantly, when speaking in an online course or in any online environment for that matter, the same rules apply for etiquette as in real-time. The golden rule of netiquette in an online class or environment is, do not do or say online what you would not do or say offline.