

## Course Netiquette Guidelines

Technology-mediated communication opens up so many opportunities to connect with people, regardless of geographical and temporal constraints. But communicating from a distance, primarily through text, presents some challenges. Establishing norms and ground rules for engagement – known in digital circles as "netiquette" – can help learners develop digital communication skills and can ensure that we are fostering healthy, inclusive digital communities. This page offers one example of how to promote netiquette in an online course.

### What is "netiquette"?

It turns out that the hedgehog is a great metaphor for the challenges of digital communication. One person might see an adorable ball of cuteness; another might see evil lurking behind those wee, beady eyes.

The same ambiguity can surround text. Text can't provide us with the visual and auditory cues we often rely upon to discern things like anger, sarcasm, and humor. So when we communicate through text, we need to do so thoughtfully.

"Netiquette" - short for "Internet etiquette" - is a collection of practices that can help us navigate some of the challenges of communicating in digital spaces. **Following netiquette standards helps us create digital learning environments in which people feel safe and respected.**

## Basic course "netiquette" guidelines

### Email

When you send an email to your instructor, teaching assistant, or classmates, you should:

1. Use your **UW email address**
2. **Use a clear and descriptive subject line.**
3. **Be brief.** Don't make the reader have to scroll to read the entire message.
4. **Get to the point.** Put the most important part at the very beginning to orient the reader to your point.
5. **Sign your message** with your name.
6. **Think before you send** the e-mail to more than one person. Does everyone really need to see your message?
7. **Forward wisely.** Be sure that the person who wrote the message you are forwarding is OK with having their message passed along.
8. **Wait if you're upset!** Resist the temptation to send an email when you're angry. If you can, wait 24 hours and allow yourself to cool off. You will make a better case for yourself if you write the email when you are calm and level-headed.
9. **Emails Are Forever.** You cannot take back what gets sent, and without a clear tone of voice, it can be easy to sound offensive. Read your message before you send it and keep in mind that some issues are better discussed in person or over the phone.

### Discussion/Group Chat

1. **Be supportive;** provide others with constructive feedback. Aspire to contribute posts that push past "I agree." Share why you agree or disagree. Build on the strengths of others or offer constructive ideas to help solve weaknesses or trouble spots.

2. **Share your knowledge.** Learning happens when people share experiences, knowledge, and ideas.
3. **Keep discussion focused** on the assigned topics/discussion prompt.
4. **Keep paragraphs short** and to the point to help with readability.
5. **Avoid using all lower-case letters or “texting” language.** (ex. BRB, IMHO).
6. **Stay engaged.** Don’t abandon the discussion after you’ve posted your minimum number of posts . Read through the posts of others and continue your engagement. Discussion isn’t about performing; it’s about learning.
7. **We’re not all online 24/7.** One of the advantages of asynchronous learning is the ability to log on at any time. But remember that others are not online 24 hours a day. Replies to your posts/questions may not be instantaneous.
8. **Be mindful of word choice and tone.** Written language can blur intent – even if you were trying to be funny, your post may not read as funny. Before posting, ensure your comments are clear and cannot be taken in the wrong context. Use emoticons (sparingly) to help express intent.
9. **Express alternative points of view respectfully.** Debate is OK; personal attacks are not.
10. **Messages of a personal nature should be emailed privately.**
11. **Harassment in any form is unacceptable** and violates the university’s student code of conduct. This includes taking screenshots of other students or the instructor in a virtual environment without their consent.
12. **Remember, we’re all human.** Although you’re learning at a distance, your peers and instructor are still human and have feelings. If you wouldn’t make the comment in a face-to-face environment, don’t post it.
13. **Honor diversity and aspire to be inclusive.** Diversity and inclusion are core values and priorities for the University of Washington. We accept and celebrate the differences that are represented through the many diverse and minoritized communities in our community. Be aware of and sensitive to the diversity of your classmates and instructors. Ensure your comments are inclusive to all participants.
14. **Ask for help.** Not sure if your post is appropriate? Ask another participant or your instructor to review it before you post.

## Zoom/Synchronous Meetings

1. **Seek permission** before you record or screenshot a meeting or lecture.
2. **Mute is your friend.** Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. This helps reduce noise so all can hear better.
3. **Setup your workspace.** If you can, find a quiet, distraction-free environment in which to join a Zoom meeting. If you can't, be sure to use headphones and keep your microphone on mute when you're not speaking. If you're worried about other people seeing your surroundings, use a virtual background ([Links to an external site.](#)) while in Zoom.
4. **Use the chat space and the raised hand feature** to ask questions.
5. **Clothes are not optional.** As a general rule, wear the kinds of clothes you would normally wear to school.