

# Slack Usage Guidelines

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## Overview

Slack is NovaTech's primary tool for real-time communication. These guidelines help us use Slack effectively while maintaining productivity and professionalism.

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## Getting Started

### Access

- **URL:** novatech.slack.com
- **Login:** Via Okta SSO
- **Mobile:** Download Slack app, sign in with NovaTech email

### Profile Setup

Complete your profile: - **Full name:** First Last - **Display name:** First name or preferred name - **Profile photo:** Professional photo (face visible) - **Title:** Your job title - **Time zone:** Accurate for scheduling - **Pronouns:** Optional, encouraged

### Status

Keep your status updated: - Working remotely - In office - In a meeting - On PTO - Out sick - Custom status with expected return

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## Channel Organization

### Channel Naming Conventions

Prefix	Purpose	Example
#team-	Team channels	#team-platform
#proj-	Project channels	#proj-cloudforge-v2
#dept-	Department channels	#dept-engineering
#ask-	Questions/support	#ask-hr
#announce-	Announcements	#announce-company
#social-	Social/fun	#social-pets
#location-	Office locations	#location-austin

### Key Channels

**Everyone should join:** - #announcements - Important company news (read-only) - #all-company - Company-wide discussions - #random - Non-work chat - #ask-hr - HR questions - #it-help - IT support

**Find your channels:** - Your team channel (ask your manager) - Your department channel - Relevant project channels

### Creating Channels

Before creating a channel: 1. Search for existing similar channels 2. Consider if a channel is needed (vs. group DM) 3. Use proper naming convention 4. Add a description and purpose 5. Set appropriate posting permissions

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## Communication Best Practices

### When to Use Slack

**Good for:** - Quick questions - Real-time collaboration - Informal discussions - Team coordination - Social connection

**Not good for:** - Detailed documentation (use Notion) - Formal decisions (document elsewhere) - Sensitive HR matters (use email) - Performance feedback (use dedicated tools) - Urgent outages (use PagerDuty + #incidents)

## Message Guidelines

**Do:** - Be clear and concise - Use threads for discussions - @mention specific people when needed - Share context (links, screenshots) - Use emoji reactions to acknowledge

**Don't:** - Use @channel/@here unnecessarily - Send multiple one-line messages (compose full thought) - Expect immediate responses - Discuss confidential information - Share sensitive data without encryption

## Threading

Always use threads when: - Replying to a message - Having a multi-message discussion - Answering questions

Benefits: - Keeps channels organized - Reduces noise - Easy to follow conversations

## @mentions

Mention	Use When
@person	Need specific person's attention
@here	Need attention from online channel members
@channel	Important, all channel members need to see

**@channel/@here guidelines:** - Avoid outside business hours - Use sparingly (real urgency) - Don't use in large channels without approval

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## Asynchronous Communication

### Working Across Time Zones

NovaTech is global. Practice async-first communication:

#### 1. Don't expect immediate responses

- Others may be in different time zones
- Respect focus time and meetings

#### 2. Provide context

- Include all information needed to respond

- Explain urgency level
- Set expectations (“no rush” or “need by EOD”)

### 3. Use scheduled messages

- Send during recipient’s working hours
- Compose now, deliver later

### 4. Document decisions

- Don’t rely on Slack for important decisions
- Move key information to Notion

## Response Time Expectations

Channel Type	Expected Response
Direct message	Same day (business hours)
Team channel	24 hours
Support channels (#ask-*)	4 hours
Urgent channels	ASAP

## Notification Management

### Recommended Settings

**Notification schedule:** - Set working hours in preferences - Enable “Do Not Disturb” outside hours

**Channel notifications:** - All messages: Critical channels only - Mentions only: Most channels - Nothing: High-volume/social channels

**Keywords:** - Add keywords to alert on (your name, project names)

### Managing Interruptions

- Use DND during focus time
- Pause notifications during meetings
- Mute noisy channels
- Use “Mark as unread” for follow-up

## **Slack Connect (External)**

### **Guidelines for External Channels**

When communicating with customers/partners via Slack Connect:

- Represent NovaTech professionally
- Don't share confidential internal information
- Follow same communication guidelines
- Report inappropriate behavior to IT

### **Requesting Slack Connect**

1. Submit request to IT
  2. Provide business justification
  3. Identify internal owner
  4. IT enables with appropriate settings
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## **Integrations and Bots**

### **Approved Integrations**

Integration	Purpose
Google Calendar	Meeting notifications
Github	PR and issue notifications
Jira	Ticket updates
Zoom	Meeting quick-start
Donut	Random coffee chats
Workday	HR notifications

### **Adding Integrations**

- Personal integrations: Self-service
  - Channel integrations: Channel admin approval
  - Workspace integrations: IT approval required
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## Security and Compliance

### Data Retention

- Messages retained for 2 years
- Some channels have extended retention (legal, compliance)
- Deleted messages still subject to retention

### Confidential Information

**Do not share in Slack:** - Passwords or credentials - Customer PII - Financial data (unless encrypted) - Legal matters (use email + legal)

For sensitive information, use: - 1Password for credentials - Encrypted channels (where available) - Direct communication channels

### External Sharing

Do not: - Share Slack screenshots externally - Forward messages without context  
- Invite external users without approval

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## Slack Etiquette

### Professionalism

- Keep it professional, even in casual channels
- Assume messages can be seen by anyone
- Respect others' opinions
- Avoid politics and controversial topics

### Emoji and GIFs

- Use moderately
- Keep workplace appropriate
- Don't overdo in professional discussions
- Custom emoji must follow content policy

## **DM vs. Channel**

**Use DM for:** - Private matters - Quick 1:1 questions - Sensitive topics

**Use channels for:** - Questions others might have - Team visibility - Searchable discussions

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## **Getting Help**

### **Slack Issues**

- Technical problems: #it-help
- Workspace questions: #slack-help
- Feature requests: #it-suggestions

### **Resources**

- Slack keyboard shortcuts: /shortcuts
  - Slack tips: slack.com/help
  - Internal FAQ: Notion > IT > Slack Guide
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*Related Documents: Communication Guidelines (HR-COM-001), Information Security Policy (IT-SEC-001), Remote Work Policy (HR-WRK-001)*