Online Etiquette[1]

Online interactions are governed by rules and social norms for interacting with others. These guidelines aim to make some of the expectations more explicit to you as a student.

Disembodied Discussions: A key distinguishing feature of an online course is that most communication occurs via the written word. Body language, voice tone, and instantaneous listener feedback of the traditional classroom are often absent. These facts need to be taken into account both when contributing messages to a discussion board and other learning spaces. *Keep in mind the following points…*

Adjust Your Language: Written text can easily be misinterpreted and the way we used to write about circumstances or people has changed to be more inclusive and less biased. Avoid the use of exclusionary or offensive language. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language. Consult sources such as, Social Justice Phrase Guide and Drop the "I" Word, for more guidance.

Be Direct in Your Communication: In general, avoid humor and sarcasm because they frequently depend either on facial expression, vocal tone, and familiarity with the reader. Communicate succinctly, using facts as evidence to back up opinions.

Be Forgiving: When someone makes a mistake -- whether it's a spelling error, a seemingly silly question or an unnecessarily long answer -- be kind about it. If you feel strongly about it, think twice before reacting. (Source: http://bit.ly/CoreRulesNetiquette)

Be Mindful: Recognize that you may state something that others may find offensive, and they may let you or the instructor know. Whether intended or not, what you communicate impacts people in different ways. The goal of communication is to convey messages. We are all accountable for our communication and, at times, may need to clarify what we mean; this may include issuing an apology. We treat this as a communal learning environment, and we are in community with each for the duration of this course. If you find yourself in a tough communication situation, it is best to consult with the instructor.

The Recorder Is On: Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent to the group, there is no taking it back. Also, although the grammar and spelling of a message typically are not graded, your audience might not be able to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. Especially for writing more than a few sentences, it is a good practice to compose on Word so that you can correct errors before posting them.

---

[1] Initially adapted and revised from the University of Wisconsin (http://online.uwc.edu/academics/how-online-education-works/online-etiquette) by Dr. Clark-Ibáñez on June 1, 2012. Updated August 28, 2018 and July 2, 2020.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be confusing to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it aloud to another person before posting it, even better.

Netspeak: There are conventions established for academic online writing. DO NOT TYPE IN ALL CAPS. This is regarded as shouting and is out of place in a classroom. Acronyms and emoticons (arrangements of symbols to express emotions) are popular, but excessive use of them can make your message difficult to read. Also, do not use abbreviated writing in formal writing (e.g., "b/c" instead of because). Emoticons, however, can occasionally be helpful to convey feelings in your writing, especially in online discussion spaces.

Online Class Meetings or Office Hours: Online courses are delivered as asynchronous (class never meets at the same time) and/or synchronous (class meets at the same time). Office hours are often "live" – you and the professor (and perhaps a couple of other students) meeting together at the same time or synchronous. Consider the following recommendations to have a successful synchronous experience:

- ➢ Before meetings, check your sound and computer/tablet/phone capabilities for the technology (teams, zoom, google hangouts). Even in the best of situations, technology for online meetings can fail us even when working well earlier in the day. Let's encourage mutual patience and understanding.
- ➢ Remember to enter the meeting with mute on, and please mute your microphone if not talking.
- ➢ Using the video feature is optional; privacy of self, home, and/or learning environment is your choice. Also, you may have others in your space who may not want to be part of the meeting. Your professor also may selectively choose to use the video feature for the same reasons.
- ➢ If you do plan to use the video, please be respectful that you are in a learning space with others: wear clothing – at least on your top half.
- ➢ If you are in a group meeting, it's appreciated to let the group know through the chat function that you "need to step away" from the meeting (e.g., bio break, attend to a loved one). Let at least the professor know if you are leaving the meeting.