

A guide to netiquette

Netiquette refers to socially acceptable behaviours when using the internet, online spaces or in digital situations. A number of SCU's policies apply in this area. These are listed below:

Code of Conduct
Computing Conditions of Use Policy
Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy
Rules – Student Misconduct Rules

Online culture

Online space is a social space, so the rules that apply in day to day life also apply in online spaces. Understanding the 'rules' in social groups that are new to you takes time. Just as you might be a little quiet when you join a new soccer team, until you get to know who is who and what the group's attitudes and views are like; 'lurk before you leap' is good practice in internet based groups.

- Observe the shared conventions around what information is shared in what formats in a new online space before you start participating.
- Do not use ALL CAPITALS when writing. This is considered to be 'shouting' – other rules can apply in particular groups, so look out for what the shared expectations might be.

Respectful behaviour and legal conduct

Online is not a special zone in which politeness and consideration can be dispensed with. Being confrontational for the sake of it, or to generate a reaction (i.e. 'flaming') is often irritating to other users and is generally poor form. By the same token, be polite about the genuine mistakes made by others, especially newcomers. The basic rules of polite interaction are the same on the internet:

- It is ok to engage in debate, but it is never ok to attack individuals
- Raise any issues you have with people privately not publicly
- Abusive, defamatory or harassing behaviour is just as illegal online as it is in offline contexts
- It is your responsibility to understand the restrictions on downloading, changing, reusing, or sharing materials that you find on the internet
- All quotes and sources need to be accurately attributed to their author(s). Copyright laws apply.

Safety and privacy

Being mindful of your own and others' privacy and safety is important. If you would not give your mobile phone number to a stranger in a bar, do not post it in an open forum. Do not take access to others' personal details (particularly through links they may inadvertently reveal to you), as an open invitation to contact them outside of the online space that you share.

- Do not share your private details online unless you know it is safe to do so
- Respect the privacy of other users of internet spaces you frequent.

Respectful communication

Online communication has some special features that can lead to unfortunate social outcomes. It is easy to forget that there is a person on the receiving end of what can be fast paced communication. Add to that, nearly

At-a-glance

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all of the social cues we normally use are absent, such as expressions, gestures, and tone of voice, both for you, and for the people that you are communicating with, and the potential for misunderstanding is clear. The potential for misinterpretation is especially apparent when joking, making satirical or incongruous comments. Be extra considerate of your readers in this case.

- Reflect on what you are about to write or say
- Consider how you would feel if you were the recipient
- Be aware that written communication such as emails, posts and comments are permanent.

Because it is quick and easy to communicate in multiple ways online you must be careful not to 'overload' people with information. Likewise, you must be mindful that instantaneous response capabilities will not always get you instant responses because people may have other priorities and pressing concerns. Take time to:

- Check that you are not 'cross-posting' the same message across groups; individuals who are members of all of them may end up wasting their time reading your message multiple times
- Make sure that you avoid sending the same email or posting comments multiple times if they are not promptly visible to you due to a moderating process being in place
- Make sure that all recipients of your communications really need to know what you are telling them
- Do not expect immediate replies to your questions or comments
- Keep posts and emails short and to the point.

Respect others' time by making the effort to share useful resources in the public sections of online group spaces. Do not misuse shared spaces, for example by posting or forwarding advertisements, or promoting your own causes in unrelated groups, a practice known as 'spamming'.

- Share useful answers to questions, links, images and other resources in the spaces set aside for group sharing online – but make sure to only post useful things in shared spaces.

Sources

University of Falmouth. Netiquette – the Rules of Engagement. [Online].

Deakin University. Communicating Online. Netiquette. [Online].