



The same way savoir-vivre establishes the rules of how (not) to behave in the real world, e.g. table manners or how to greet one another, people have created a virtual savoir-vivre, **the netiquette**.

What is netiquette and why is it so important?

The word netiquette derives from **net** and **etiquette** and as such, is a set of established conventions that have evolved over time on the Internet and on the Usenet¹ news. Netiquette is most of all based on:

- what has been found **useful and proper in the electronic form** of communication made possible by the Internet,
- what is **appropriate in any form of communication** between civilized human beings,
- and what is dictated by **the common sense**.

What good might following the netiquette do you?

What you write and how you behave makes your Internet personality, which then directly influences and alters your "real-world personality". *Think carefully what kind of picture you wish to give of yourself.* One day you will most probably have dealings with a few of the persons who have formed their picture of you on the Internet in real life.² Displaying a good familiarity of the netiquette in one's postings can sometimes have a "secret handshake effect" on the Internet.

If you pay attention to the netiquette:

- Your **communication will be better**. You will **gain more credibility**.
- You will in all probability **get helpful answers** more readily when you have questions to ask or need **help** on the Internet.

If, however, you repeatedly and deliberately **ignore** the netiquette, you will soon develop **a reputation of a troublemaker**, and at least the more serious users will start avoiding you altogether.

¹ Usenet is a worldwide distributed Internet discussion system. For more information, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usenet>.

² For more information see *How (not) to prepare for a first meeting?* at www.InternetFit.com.





15 tips on how (not) to behave in the virtual world

1 Be responsible.

Once the information you post is online, it is public and anybody with an Internet connection can access your information. Remember - anything you post will be public for an indefinite period of time, even if you attempt to modify or delete it. Be aware of privacy settings.

2 Be respectful.

Always be respectful to people within the social space and **respect the dignity and privacy** of others. **Do not harass, intimidate, abuse or threaten anyone online and do not post any controversial, illegal or offensive content.** Keep your comments appropriate and polite. Follow the same standards of behavior and ethics online that you follow in real life. It might sound a bit funny, but remember **there are people on the other side of your computer screen!** It is very easy to offend when your only means of communication is a keyboard. Those reading your words may well come from very different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and English might not be their first language. Without voice inflections, facial expressions and the body language of face to face conversation, **a seemingly innocent remark or gentle irony can turn into a major insult.**

3 Represent your business well.

Post meaningful information that can **bring value to your brand.** Write things that people will value. Share your knowledge and articles or start a discussion on an interesting topic. Remember that even when using social media for personal use, you are still a representative of your company.

4 Do not share confidential information.

Certain documents and information are **for internal use only** and should not be shared online. **Never share proprietary information** or personal information of your employees, co-workers or business partners. Never give your username and password to another person or organization.

5 Post accurate information.

Never knowingly post information that is false or inaccurate, or on a topic that you are unsure of. If you are unsure of a topic, ask someone who is familiar with it.

6 When in doubt, do not post.

If you are unsure whether or not you should post a piece of information, don't. If you wouldn't share the information with your boss, you should not share it online. If you are unsure about posting information, seek permission.

7 Avoid spammers and don't spam others.

Never send unsolicited advertisements, bulk mail, chain letters, or any other type of spam.

8 Stay on top of things.

The social media space is fast-moving and ever-evolving. Stay updated to use it to your best advantage.





9 Don't shout.

In the virtual world, **using all caps is equal to SHOUTING** and is considered bad manners. Remember about the appropriate form of your content.

10 Quote visibly

If you cite references or quotes, make sure you **mention the source**, do not infringe commercial copyright. When replying to a message, **quote relevant sections** of the message you are replying to. It is polite to include enough to give context and mention the original source of information. It is impolite to include all of the message (if it is long) or none of the message.

11 Use the language well

Always check spelling and grammar but avoid criticizing other people's use of English. For one, they might suffer from dyslexia or are learning the language. Also, it helps to avoid arguments and pointing out meaningless mistakes.

12 Read the FAQ section

Before posting questions or writing emails with inquiries, **check the FAQ section** (Frequently Asked Questions). You might save your and other people's time.

13 Know the lingo

Internet users in general and social media users specifically, as any other distinctive group, have a language of their own - an Internet jargon, so to speak. Newsgroup postings are often littered with acronyms and when used wisely they are a useful form of shorthand. However, too many will make your messages unreadable or difficult to follow. **Familiarize yourself with some of the most basic expressions** to ensure more effective communication:

- *FYI* – 'for your information'
- *BTW* – 'by the way'
- *BRB* – 'be right back'
- *OMG* – 'oh my God'
- *IMHO* – 'in my humble/honest opinion'
- *ROTFL* – 'rolling on the floor laughing'
- *RTFM* – 'read the flipping manual'
- *TIA* – 'thanks in advance'

14 Use emoticons wisely

Emoticons are simple graphics made up of text characters and they are used to let those reading your postings know you are making a joke or what you are thinking, thus a good way of writing between the





lines. However, remember they are **not appropriate in business correspondence**. To read more, visit our website to find *How (not) to write (business) emails*.

15 No advertising on newsgroups / forums

Unless they are specifically designed for such purpose, newsgroups and forums are not the place for blatant advertising, it **is frowned upon** and thus, **counterproductive**. However, there's no harm in mentioning useful or relevant products and services in response to a newsgroup posting, even if they are your own.

In short

- Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life.
- Respect other people's time and bandwidth.
- Share expert knowledge.
- Make yourself look good online.

For more information please visit:

www.InternetFit.com

