Core Rules of Netiquette

Rule 1: Remember the Human

When communicating electronically, whether through email, instant message, discussion post, text, or some other method, practice the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Remember, your written words are read by real people, all deserving of respectful communication. Before you press "send" or "submit," ask yourself, "Would I be okay with this if someone else had written it?"

Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life

While it can be argued that standards of behavior may be different in the virtual world, they certainly should not be lower. You should do your best to act within the laws and ethical manners of society whenever you inhabit "cyberspace." A good rule to follow is that if you wouldn't say it to someone’s face, then you shouldn't say it online. Name calling, cursing, expressing deliberately offensive opinions -- if you wouldn’t do it to the face of anyone who might conceivably see what you write, don't write it. And it's not just what you say, but how you say it. All caps are generally perceived as yelling, while all lower case implies a lack of education and/or self-confidence. Text “slang” is not appropriate. And, please don't forget to say please and thank you as appropriate.

Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace

"Netiquette varies from domain to domain." (Shea, 1994) Depending on where you are in the virtual world, the same written communication can be acceptable in one area, where it might be considered inappropriate in another. What you text to a friend may not be appropriate in a communication to a classmate or colleague.

Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth

Electronic communication takes time: time to read and time in which to respond. Most people today lead busy lives, just like you do, and don't have time to read or respond to frivolous emails or discussion posts. As a virtual world communicator, it is your responsibility to make sure that the time spent reading your words isn't wasted. Make your written communication meaningful and to the point, without extraneous text or superfluous graphics or attachments that may take forever to download.

Rule 5: Make yourself look good online

One of the best things about the virtual world is the lack of judgment associated with your physical appearance, sound of your voice, or the clothes you wear (unless you post a video of yourself singing Karaoke in a clown outfit.) You will, however, be judged by the quality of your writing, so keep the following tips in mind:

- Always check for spelling and grammar errors
Know what you’re talking about and state it clearly
Be pleasant and polite

A good rule to follow is that if you wouldn’t show it in public, then you shouldn’t share it online. If you would have a problem with your boss, your parents, or your kids seeing it now, or at any point in the future, don’t post it online. Sadly, we have too many examples of this already.

**Rule 6: Share expert knowledge**

The Internet offers its users many benefits; one is the ease in which information can be shared or accessed and in fact, this “information sharing” capability is one of the reasons the Internet was founded. So in the spirit of the Internet’s “founding fathers,” share what you know! When you post a question and receive intelligent answers, share the results with others. Are you an expert at something? Post resources and references about your subject matter. Recently expanded your knowledge about a subject that might be of interest to others? Share that as well.

**Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control**

What is meant by "flaming" and "flame wars?" "Flaming is what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back any emotion." (Shea, 1994). As an example, think of the kinds of passionate comments you might read on a sports blog. While "flaming" is not necessarily forbidden in virtual communication, "flame wars," when two or three people exchange angry posts between one another, must be controlled or the camaraderie of the group could be compromised. Don't feed the flames; extinguish them by guiding the discussion back to a more productive direction.

**Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy**

Depending on what you are reading in the virtual world, be it an online class discussion forum, Facebook page, or an email, you may be exposed to some private or personal information that needs to be handled with care. Perhaps someone is sharing some medical news about a loved one or discussing a situation at work. What do you think would happen if this information "got into the wrong hands?" Embarrassment? Hurt feelings? Loss of a job? Just as you expect others to respect your privacy, so should you respect the privacy of others. Be sure to err on the side of caution when deciding to discuss or not to discuss virtual communication.

**Rule 9: Don't abuse your power**

Just like in face-to-face situations, there are people in cyberspace who have more "power" than others. They have more expertise in technology or they have years of experience in a particular skill or subject matter. Maybe it's you who possesses all of this knowledge and power! Just remember: knowing more than others do or having more power than others may have does not give you the right to take advantage of anyone. Think of Rule 1: Remember the human.
Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

Not everyone has the same amount of experience working in the virtual world. And not everyone knows the rules of netiquette. At some point, you will see a stupid question, read an unnecessarily long response, or encounter misspelled words; when this happens, practice kindness and forgiveness as you would hope someone would do if you had committed the same offense. If it's a minor "offense," you might want to let it slide. If you feel compelled to respond to a mistake, do so in a private email rather than a public forum.


Social Media Guidelines (From the Student Handbook)

The University of the Cumberlands seeks to promote open discussion on social media sites, subject to its existing codes and policies.

While all members of the University community -- students, staff and faculty -- are expected to adhere to codes of conduct reflective of the Christian values of the university, both on and off line, the University’s Social Media Policy recognizes that employees of the University are governed by contractual agreements and personnel policies that may use different guidelines for using social media than those for students.

The following guidelines govern student communications:
- All institutional policies apply online just as they would offline.
- Notwithstanding, the University reserves the right to take down posts on pages administered by University personnel when considered to be necessary, including, but not limited to, violations of the University’s codes and policies.
- The University reserves the right to block individual’s access to social media sites administered by University personnel when they have been found to have engaged in violations of the University’s codes and policies.
- Conduct online, including on social media sites, can be subject to discipline in accordance with the University’s codes and policies. The University reserves the right to deny access via its networks to anyone deemed in violation of the code of conduct.
- Use of the any trademark or logo is prohibited without written consent.
- Concerns about conduct online should be reported to the appropriate office/personnel.

Prohibited learner conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

**Illegal Activities:** Learners may not post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that they know is illegal or could reasonably be expected to know is illegal. Conduct that violates federal, state or local laws is prohibited.

**Theft:** Learners may not post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that violates copyright or other protected intellectual property rights. Unauthorized use of university property is prohibited. Theft or abuse of computer resources is prohibited.
**Disrespect:** (This is the basis of Netiquette!) Learners may not harass, threaten, or embarrass others. Learners may not post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is racially, religiously, or ethnically offensive or is harmful, abusive, vulgar, sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially offensive. Learners must refrain from behavior that may be perceived as inappropriate, offensive, and unfair and must treat all other learners, faculty, staff, and administrators with respect at all times.

**Dishonesty:** Learners may not intentionally provide false information, forge, alter, or falsify documents. Learners may not represent the academic work of others as their own.

Learners engaging in prohibited conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to: course failure, probation, suspension, or expulsion. Such sanctions may lead to additional academic and financial consequences. Learners who are unable to complete a course resulting from disciplinary sanctions, suspension or expulsion are not eligible for tuition refunds.