



---

## Internet Etiquette

M. N.O. Sadiku<sup>1</sup>, S. R. Nelatury<sup>2</sup>, S.M. Musa<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX 77446

<sup>2</sup>School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Pennsylvania State University, Erie, PA 16563-1701

---

**Abstract** As more people form cyber communities, more people from different cultures will come online. Internet etiquette is a set of appropriate behavior we demonstrate when online. It is the adaptation of the real-life etiquette for Internet users. Unfortunately, a lot of Internet users are ignorant of Internet etiquette. This paper provides a brief introduction to Internet etiquette.

**Keywords** Internet etiquette, netiquette, online etiquette, digital customs

---

### Introduction

The Internet community consists of users of computer networks. Internet allows people to interact with each other and communicate in various ways such as instant messaging, social networking, texting, and electronic mail. As a result, the general standards of the larger community serve as a check against network interactions. Good manners are always appreciated in effective communication. As the use of Internet expands, we must follow some basic rules of etiquette. Internet etiquette refers to conduct that is socially acceptable when using the Internet. It is also known as netiquette (or net etiquette), which combines the words network and etiquette. It is a social code of good behavior when communicating online. It is simply having people skills. This is largely related to the cultural context and what is considered to be socially acceptable since community standards dictate appropriate behavior [1].

Different types of technology require different etiquette. For example, the etiquette for emailing is different from the etiquette for using mobile devices or telephone etiquette.

### Importance of Etiquette

Internet etiquette is for all users of the Internet, ranging from online learners to Internet professionals. Respecting group norms and rules is important for building healthy Internet community which consists of Internet users. Internet users must have mutual respect for each other in order to maintain the Internet as an effective social medium. For example, sending a rule and insensitive message violates group norms and is called “flaming.”

Knowing the rules of the Internet culture will place us at an advantage over those who may not know. Paying attention to netiquette will cause no harm or discomfort to others. As the Internet becomes a global medium, Internet etiquette becomes more culture-specific and we must endeavor to avoid misunderstanding among international audience who may not be native-born English speakers [2].

### Common Rules

One rule of thumb is to apply etiquette for human-to-human interaction to Internet etiquette. This results to norms that are universal but specific to each culture. Several lists of common behavior on the Internet have been proposed. Here we provide ten common, basic rules [2-5].



1. *Keep your audience in mind:* This will help you use appropriate language.
2. *Be brief:* Most people will not read a long message. Think before you post. Make it simple, clear, and brief.
3. *Assume permanence:* Whatever you post will be saved permanently. Be stingy with distributing copies.
4. *Use good spelling and grammar:* Use a spell-check and pick words carefully. Poor spelling and poor grammar distract. Be professional.
5. *DO NOT WRITE IN CAPS:* Writing in capital letters is equivalent to electronic shouting or anger. Flaming in electronic communication has the potential for alienation and for misunderstanding the message tone. Avoid rebuking, insulting or name-calling.
6. *Respect copyright and intellectual property:* Specify where your ideas come from by giving credit to the original owner. Be an ethical user and keep the law.
7. *Use simple language:* People may not understand your jargons, slang, and acronyms. Use simple terms.
8. *Be human:* Be courteous and nice. Make your first online impression count. Respect the privacy of others.
9. *Never give personal information:* As much as possible, do not give personal information such as password, credit card number, and social security number.
10. *Apply common sense:* Good online manners involve the application of common sense.

These guidelines are developed over time in a variety of Internet applications such as emailing, chat, instant messaging, and surfing the web. Following the recommendations will make you professional and make good impression on others.

### Conclusion

Etiquette norms are becoming so important that Internet users are required to comply. They are usually enforced by other Internet users who are quick to point out violations. As digital citizens continue to grow in number, Internet etiquette will be increasingly important. As one uses the Internet, one must maintain courtesy, etiquette, and professionalism.

### References

- [1]. "Etiquette in technology," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etiquette\\_in\\_technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etiquette_in_technology)
- [2]. J. M. Kayany, "Internet Etiquette (Netiquette)," in H. Bidgoli, *The Internet Encyclopedia*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, vol. 2, 2004, pp. 274-285.
- [3]. N. Szofran, "Internet etiquette and ethics," *Internet Librarian*, January 1994, pp. 66-69.
- [4]. G. McMurdo, "Netiquette for networkers," *Journal of Information Science*, vol 21, no. 4, 1995, pp. 305-318.
- [5]. J. Preece, "Etiquette online: from nice to necessary," *Communications of ACM*, vol. 47, no. 4, April 2004, pp. 56-61.

### About the authors

Matthew N.O. Sadiku ( sadiku@iee.org) is a professor at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. He is an IEEE fellow. His research interests include computational electromagnetics and computer networks.

Sudarshan R. Nelatury (srn3@psu.edu) is an associate professor at Penn State University, The Behrend College, Erie, Pennsylvania. His teaching and research interests lie in electromagnetics and signal processing.

Sarhan M. Musa (srmusa@pvamu.edu) is a professor in the Department of Engineering Technology at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He has been the director of Prairie View Networking Academy, Texas, since 2004. He is an LTD Spring and Boeing Welliver Fellow.

