

**Netiquette in an Online Academic Setting:  
A Guide for CUNY School of Professional Studies  
Students**

## **I. Welcome to the CUNY School of Professional Studies**

Congratulations on your admission to the CUNY School of Professional Studies!

As a new student embarking to complete your studies online – this guide is meant to introduce you to an essential aspect of the online learning experience – *netiquette*: etiquette on the internet. Netiquette is essential for students to understand because course participation is documented by students' postings on course discussion boards. The course discussion boards must maintain an academic atmosphere and, therefore, students should learn how to write and behave online in a manner consistent with academic excellence.

Whether you are new to online learning, completed online coursework in the past, or have experience posting in online discussion boards – please review this guide carefully and thoroughly before posting.

## **II. Why Netiquette?**

Begin with making an excellent impression – and keep it. How a person behaves online reflects one's reputation, willingness to learn, seriousness and motivation both as a student and as an individual. In most if not all cases of online learning, how one behaves online will be the only way for an instructor to judge the *character* of a student. With traditional classes – character, willingness, and motivation are often used as indicators by instructors to take note of the seriousness of a student. That seriousness corresponds to how deserving a student is for a particular grade. Consequently, the presence or lack of seriousness on behalf of a student may affect the outcome of a grade in a course. Therefore proper netiquette in an online academic setting is paramount to create an excellent impression for instructors and fellow classmates. *Remember to make an excellent impression.*

## **III. What is Netiquette?**

As mentioned on the introduction – netiquette is etiquette on the internet. Several points are valuable to keep in mind when posting on course discussion boards.

- 1) **Remember the human on the other side of the line.**  
While the text posted on discussion boards seems to be attached to ambiguous usernames of people whom we may not have met in person – it is very important to remember that those usernames belong to *real people* with real minds, thoughts, and feelings.
- 2) **Use the Golden Rule**  
“*Treat people the way in which you want to be treated*” is as true as ever – especially in an online learning environment. Consider carefully before posting: “*Would I say what I wrote to the other person's face?*”
- 3) **Think before you post.**

Is your post relevant to the topic on the discussion board? Will your post give an accurate representation of your academic abilities with consideration to the course that you are taking? Is your post written clearly with proper grammar and spelling? If you answered yes to the above questions, then your post is highly likely to create a positive academic discussion favored by students and the instructor.

#### **IV. Dos and Don'ts of Netiquette in an Academic Setting**

Below is a comprehensive list of dos and don'ts applicable to course discussion boards.

##### **Suggestions for Posting to Discussion Boards, Chats, Blogs, and Wikis**

**Do:**

- Post in a manner that reflects your preparation, motivation, and knowledge of the course content.
- Post messages relevant to the discussion topic thread.
- Post messages that make a positive and intellectual contribution.
- Post messages that contribute to a civilized debate.
- Ask relevant questions.

**Do Not:**

- Do not take a discussion thread off-topic.
- Do not double-post. If possible, edit your post instead of adding one post after another by yourself.
- Do not plagiarize. Ask your instructor or academic advisor for more details about plagiarism, or alternatively read detailed information concerning Academic Integrity policies at the CUNY School of Professional Studies at the following link: [http://sps.cuny.edu/acad\\_policies/acad\\_integrity.html](http://sps.cuny.edu/acad_policies/acad_integrity.html).

##### **Spelling and Grammar**

**Do:**

- Write complete and coherent sentences with proper punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.
- Use italics to emphasize a point.
- Write in a manner that reflects your command of the English language as well as your competence of course content.

**Do Not:**

- Do not use all-caps when posting a message. Messages posted in all-caps are interpreted as shouting and are considered very rude and inappropriate. *Use italics instead* in selected areas of your text to emphasize an important point on your message.
- Do not write incoherent sentences, run-ons, or drop punctuation or capitalization.

- Do not use smilies. The course message boards are academic in nature.
- Do not use internet acronyms. (Examples: *lol*, *omg* )
- Do not use abbreviations. (Examples: “u” for “you,” “ne1” for “anyone”)
- Do not use swearing or curse words.

**Under no circumstances:**

Do not start or contribute to flame wars or flame other students or the instructor. Flame wars are disruptive posts often revolving around two or more individuals. The posts may contain anger, resentment, incivility, personal attacks, or a combination thereof. Flame wars disrupt the learning process and may make other students uncomfortable.

If other persons start a flame war on a discussion board – do not reply or post on the topic.

**Reminder:**

The content posted by students on course discussion boards, chat rooms, blogs, and wikis is used by instructors to determine the level at which a student is achieving and how serious the student is towards their studies. Make every opportunity to give an excellent impression and follow the standards of netiquette as applicable to an academic setting explained above.

**Remember: Post early, often and in an appropriate and thoughtful manner.**