

NETIQUETTE COMMANDMENTS ONLINE STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

Waking up early to the morning alarm, getting ready, eating breakfast, and then rushing to catch the college bus – all these seemingly mundane tasks have taken a hit ever since the lockdown came into effect. During the endless days of lockdown, every move made and every step taken has been possible thanks to the internet. Similarly, online classrooms have replaced traditional classrooms. Classrooms (be it traditional or online) should be a learning centered environment in which both faculty and students are unhindered by disruptive behaviour.

‘Your degree is just a piece of paper; your education is seen in your behaviour’

Behaviour plays a vital role in everyone’s life. Simple requirements that you need for social behaviour and the manners you should use in any class or community are known as ‘*Etiquette*’. *Etiquette* is not new to us. You grow up with your parents constantly telling you to “mind your manners”. However, in this digital age, there are some unwritten online rules that need to be followed. Online communication lacks verbal and non-verbal cues such as intonation, gestures, stance and facial expressions. The absence of cues can quickly lead to a misunderstanding in an online environment. To reduce the occurrence of misunderstanding and to promote a safe and peaceful online environment, here is a list of netiquette guidelines every student needs to know. *Netiquette* is the code of acceptable behaviour that users should follow while on the internet. In simple terms, it is the conduct of an individual while online.



1. Use Proper language

It is easy for written text to be misread and misunderstood. Have you ever sent a text with good intentions, but realized that the other person has misunderstood you and now thinks you have been rude? Being aware of strong language will help you to avoid confusion and misunderstandings.

- Avoid slang as much as possible. Slang is considered as neither academic nor professional.
- Never type in all caps. Writing everything in capital letters is considered to be similar to shouting, no matter how intelligent your text is.
- Read everything out aloud before submitting.

2. Be careful with humour and sarcasm

While your personality may shine in an online class, make sure that it is clear to everyone that you are being funny and not rude. Many times, an obvious joke to you could come across as unpleasant or rude to the reader. It is best to completely avoid sarcasm in an online classroom. Always be polite and direct in the way you communicate to avoid misunderstandings and tension.

3. Keep an eye on your grammar and spelling

Textspeak *can b gr8 4 tlkng wit ur frnds*. In an educational setting (even online), keep it formal. Your written communication should be professional and should reflect a proper writing style. If you are not sure about your grammar, you can check it online using www.grammarly.com, www.gingersoftware.com, or any other free online tools. Always use proper grammar in online classrooms. Save your textspeak and less than stellar grammar for social conversations.

4. Don't abuse the chat box

Chat boxes that are included in online courses can be a helpful resource or a major distraction, depending on how you use it. They are included for the purpose of students to ask questions. Chat boxes are not an instant messenger tool you use to chat with your friends. Make sure that every comment you post stays within the scope of the online course material.



5. Keep your camera on

An online classroom is meant to emulate an actual classroom. That includes being visible to everyone in the classroom. Keeping it off is considered rude as it displays disregard for the others and a lack of professionalism.

6. Dress well

Despite being an online classroom, you would still need to be dressed well, as you would dress when attending your actual classes. Dressing casual presents you in a negative light. It also has a second purpose of subconsciously prompting you to keep up your productivity and efficiency.

7. Mute

It is always annoying and frustrating when you end up hearing background noise from others, especially when you need to pay attention to the professor. After all, people do not need to know what goes on in your private life. Muting your microphone when you join and when

you are not speaking gives other participants the ability to chime in and share their thoughts without any distraction or frustration.

8. No eating allowed

If you feel that you would be hungry soon, eat something before the class starts. Others would not want to see you eat and it would be quite distracting. After all, you would not be eating in the middle of an actual classroom when there is a lesson going on.

9. Pick the right spot

Before your class starts, spend some time to find the right spot. Pick a spot that has plenty of light or has a window in front of you. Make sure that there is no clutter behind you since others will be able to see it from the moment you log in. The best background that you could have is a plain wall.

10. Equipment check

Before your class starts, always check your equipment – your camera and microphone. Open the software and check if there is any software update. Make a test call (most software have a test call feature to check if everything is working well).

11. Read first before hitting submit

Before replying to discussions, make sure you read through all the comments. This helps you avoid repeating something that has already said by someone else. Always remember to add something new to the conversation and more importantly – stay on topic.



12. Think before you type

A passing comment spoken in a classroom can easily be forgotten a few minutes later but what you share in an online classroom has a permanent digital record. It seems easier to say hurtful and disrespectful things online, but remember you are talking to a real person who can be affected by the words you say and type. Never say anything online that you would not say face-to-face.

Be kind

You may be respectful, but others may not be. When being personally attacked on the web, it is easy to lose your temper. However, you will not win any argument this way. A moment of patience in a moment of anger saves a hundred days of regret.

13. Attempt before asking

If you are confused or stuck in an assignment, your first instinct would be to ask someone. However, it is better to attempt figuring it out on your own, rather than asking others. This is because if you ask someone else, you do not learn anything. Learning is about giving yourself a shot. If your question remains unanswered after a bit of effort, feel free to ask your instructor.



14. Submit files in the right way

You will not be printing assignments and submitting them to your instructor in person. Hence, knowing how to properly submit your work online is essential to your success as an online student. Always follow instructions given for online submissions. Make sure you submit the assignments in the correct format to avoid additional work for you and your instructor.

15. Adhere to the same standards you follow in real life

Good netiquette means conducting yourself in an online class with the same respect, politeness and professionalism that you would exhibit in a real-life classroom.

'Take a minute; look at your goals, look at your performance, see if your behaviour matches your goals' – Kenneth H. Blanchard

Always remember these netiquette tips and try to follow them in your online classrooms, as these would enable you to have a fruitful learning experience.

'You will experience your success when you BEHAVE accordingly. BE and you shall HAVE'