



Internet basics

Netiquette

Netiquette (text guide)

The internet provides us with so many opportunities to communicate and have our say by participating online.

There are online discussion forums and social networking sites where you share your knowledge and ask other people questions on just about every topic imaginable. You might also provide input on issues that affect your life and community by participating in online consultations.

It's worth knowing how you should represent yourself online, because you can't always tell who will see what you've written. Also, you can't always be sure how other people will interpret what you've written. This is important because it can be hard to change or remove something from the internet once it's been published.

Internet etiquette—netiquette

One of the best things you can do to make sure you're happy with your contributions to the online world is to follow the rules of internet etiquette or 'netiquette'.

Netiquette can guide us on what's generally considered okay to do and say on the internet, and what might be inappropriate. The main thing to remember is to treat other people the way you'd like to be treated and don't say anything online that you wouldn't say in real life.

Email netiquette

There are netiquette rules for emailing, which are easy to follow once you know about them.

These include little things like not typing in all UPPER CASE or 'CAPS LOCK' as some people might think you're angry or yelling at them.

And although most of us use 'emoticons' when we're emailing friends and family—like smiley faces, sad faces and surprised faces—emoticons might not be acceptable for more formal emails.

Also, it can be easy to forget that emails can be forwarded to other people, including people we don't know. If you are forwarding an email you received from one person to other people, you should remove all the personal information about the sender, including their email address. That way you're helping keep their personal information private.

Participating in online discussions and online consultations

Another time to use netiquette is when you're participating in online discussions.

You can join online discussion forums and share information, ask questions and answer questions on almost any topic you can think of.

You could also participate in online consultations—this is where organisations like government agencies ask you to use the internet to have your say on issues that affect you and your community.

These 'online communities' usually have their own rules and if people don't follow the rules a 'moderator' may step in. Moderators can give advice or warn users who are not following the rules.

Moderators can even delete comments from discussion forums if they're inappropriate.

Who said that?

Before you participate online, you should decide if you want to use your real name or not.

On some websites you can make a comment without leaving a name. On other websites you might have to create a personal profile or a user account before you can participate.

Most people use a 'handle', or a username that isn't their full name. This is a really important step if you want to help protect your privacy.

If you do want to create a username, you should check to see how secure the website is and what it intends to do with any personal information you provide—like an email address.

If you're participating in online consultations you might be able to provide your comments privately, so that only the organisation running the consultation can read your comments.

Commenting on blogs and websites

Blogs are websites where one person shares their thoughts and ideas with the world. A lot of blogs invite you to share your thoughts by commenting on what they've said.

Other websites, like some entertainment and news websites, also encourage comments from the public, and just like discussion forums, there are usually rules to be followed.