

Netiquette

Approximately 96 percent of employed American adults are using new communications technologies—either by using the internet, email, or owning a cell phone, according to the Pew Research Center.

How quickly we've changed the way we communicate in such a short time. Where most business correspondence just 20 years ago was with telephone calls or face-to-face meetings, now several days worth of conversation and deliberations can be consolidated into a five minute long email exchange.

The speed and convenience of electronic communication enabled it to spread quickly into both our personal and work lives. But it has also created a separation between people who are communicating – making it easier to write something in the heat of a moment instead of considering the way your words may impact the person or persons you are writing to.

Using both email and the Internet can sometimes trick you into a more relaxed state of conversation, since you don't have to interact physically with whoever reads your message. Plus, the speed and informality of both the Internet and email increases the chance of making a mistake or unintentionally conveying the wrong message. Without the benefit of non-verbal cues or being able to hear your voice, something that is meant one way, can be interpreted by the reader in a completely different way.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when using email and the Internet for correspondence:

- If you wouldn't say it to their face, don't write it in an email or message board.
- Re-read your message before sending to correct possible spelling/punctuation errors and to see if you are communicating what you want to communicate. Try to see it through the recipient's eyes.
- When responding to email, do not use "reply all" if you only need to communicate with the sender or if you are the recipient through the "bcc:" (blind carbon copy) field.
- Try to avoid lumping multiple issues into one message. If more than one item needs to be addressed, a separate email for each subject gives you a much better chance that each will be addressed. People tend to respond to only one item in an email.
- Use proper punctuation as often as you can. Without the ability to hear how your message is intended, you need to put in the proper punctuation marks (particularly commas and periods) to avoid misunderstandings.

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