

## Student Netiquette Guide for Distance Learning

It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.

The purpose of the following information is to help you be a more effective and successful student when communicating via e-mail, chat rooms, or on discussion boards as a part of your distance learning activities at LaGuardia Community College.

### General Guidelines

When communicating online with your Professors, Advisors, and Peers, you should always:

- Treat your instructor, advisor, and classmates with respect in an e-mail or any other communication.
- Always use your professors' proper title: Dr. or Prof., or if in doubt use Mr. or Ms.
- Unless specifically invited, don't refer to your instructor by the first name.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Remember that all college-level communication should have correct spelling and grammar (this includes discussion boards).
- Avoid slang terms such as "wassup?" and texting abbreviations such as "u" instead of "you."
- Use standard fonts such as Ariel, Calibri or Times New Roman and use a size 10 or 12 pt. font
- Avoid using the caps lock feature AS IT CAN BE INTERPRETED AS YELLING.
- Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons like :)
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as the tone is sometimes lost in an e-mail or discussion post, and your message might be taken seriously or sound offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and other's).
- Do not send confidential information via e-mail.

### E-mail Netiquette

When you send an e-mail to your instructor, advisor, or classmates, you should:

- Use a descriptive subject line.
- Be brief.
- Avoid attachments unless you are sure your recipients can open them.
- Avoid HTML in favor of plain text.
- Sign your message with your name, return e-mail address, and contact number.
- Think before you send the e-mail to more than one person. Does everyone really need to see your message?
- Be sure you REALLY want everyone to receive your response when you click, "reply all."
- Be sure that the message author intended for the information to be passed along before you click the "forward" button.

### Message Board Netiquette and Guidelines

When posting on the Discussion Board in your online class, you should:

- Make posts that are on-topic and within the scope of the course material.
- Take your posts seriously and review and edit your posts before sending.
- Be as brief as possible while still making a thorough comment.
- Always give proper credit when referencing or quoting another source.
- Be sure to read all messages in a thread before replying.
- Don't repeat someone else's post without adding something of your own to it.
- Avoid short, generic replies such as, "I agree." You should include why you agree or add to the previous point.
- Always be respectful of others' opinions even when they differ from your own.
- When you disagree with someone, you should express your differing opinion in a respectful, non-critical way.
- Do not make personal or insulting remarks.

- Be open-minded.

## Security

Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm.

- Don't share your Student Portal or CUNYFirst passwords with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always log out when you are finished using the system, especially when using a public computer.

Overall, you should use common sense when communicating electronically. In the same way that you would present yourself in person to make a positive and constructive impression, you should always do the same when taking an online course. Remember that the majority of what we communicate to others is in non-verbal ways (body language, voice inflection, etc.), and all you have in online courses is in a text form. Make sure your digital impression is a clear and positive one.

## Tips for Virtual Meetings

While virtual meetings may not be something you are accustomed to, it's easy to fall victim to some major meeting faux pas. That's right, if you have an online meeting from home with your Professor or Advisor, and your webcam displays your unmade bed with your Star Wars sheets, that's a problem.

To help you keep your meetings productive and professional follow these seven simple etiquette rules and tips:

### 1. Leave the keyboard alone

Whether you're diligently taking notes like the model student you are or sneakily chatting with your class best friend about the latest news, the sound of your typing is distracting. It's not only distracting everyone else in the meeting (because your laptop's internal microphone is inches away from your keyboard), it's also preventing you from devoting your full attention to the meeting. So either use a headset or pick up your notebook and pen to take meeting notes. *Writing your notes forces you to process and condense the information rather than typing everything you hear word for word. So really, writing your notes is better for everyone!*

### 2. Dress appropriately

One of the magical things about having class or working remotely is the freedom to wear anything to work or class. It's the dream. However, when you are in a virtual meeting and sharing your webcam, your professor, classmates and coworkers will be less than thrilled to see your lazy clothes and bed head. So take a minute to throw on a clean shirt and brush your hair. The best part of actually getting ready is that you'll feel more focused to take on the virtual meeting.

### 3. Be aware of your surroundings

Your professor, advisor or coworkers won't be able to hear your ideas or take you seriously when there is a pile of dirty clothes in the corner behind you. You also want to avoid looking like you work from a cave because of bad lighting. Adjust your work set up so that you face a window or area exposed to plenty of light. And make sure your background is professional and work appropriate. This means:

- No beds (unmade or made) in the background
- No messy rooms or open closets where everyone can see your clutter
- No random passers-by or super cute pets that will be distracting
- No NSFW artwork or tchotchkes

You should also remove any noisy distractions. While kids and pets may be adorable and you love them to pieces, your professor, advisor or coworkers won't like having to talk over a screaming child or barking dog.

### 4. Mute your microphone when you're not talking

There's nothing more frustrating than hearing that alien echo noise from conflicting microphones. Save everyone from the ear-splitting madness by joining the meeting while on mute.

If you're working in an open-office layout, a noisy cafe, or anywhere that has a lot of background noise, make sure to keep your microphone muted when you're not speaking so it gives other participants the ability to chime in and share their thoughts without distraction.

### **5. Speak up**

First of all, when you enter a small meeting (around two to five people), announce yourself when you join. It's awkward to hear the someone-just-joined ding followed by silence. When you hop on the meeting, introduce yourself, and say hi — just make sure not to interrupt someone mid-sentence.

Secondly, don't be afraid to speak loudly during a virtual meeting. Your classmates will appreciate being able to hear you without having to strain their ears. Keep in mind if your team is in a conference room, that means they are all sitting around a single phone speaker or crowded around a laptop. It doesn't hurt to invest in a good microphone set up to help ensure you are heard during virtual meetings.

### **6. No food allowed**

Make sure to eat a snack before your virtual meeting. No one wants to see you stuff your face with chips while discussing important business matters. It's distracting, and you won't be able to focus on the task at hand because you have to worry about dropping crumbs all over your keyboard.

### **7. Stay seated and stay present**

It may be tempting to check your inbox or carry on a side conversation during a dull moment in a meeting, but don't do it! You might miss out on key information or an opportunity to give input. If you're using your webcam, use attentive body language — sit up straight, don't make big extraneous movements, and don't let your eyes wander too much. If you have any tips or have witnessed any virtual meeting mishaps, please share in the comments below!