



EMAIL ETIQUETTE

In 1999, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that, "the unrestricted use of unsolicited bulk commercial email appears to undermine the integrity and utility of the Internet system" and is "contrary to the emerging principles of Netiquette" (1267623 Ontario Inc. v. Nexx Online Inc., [1999] O.J. No. 2246 (O.C.J., Wilson, J., June 14, 1999))

In any form of communication there is an unwritten set of rules governing conduct. The same can be said for online interaction; it's called Email Etiquette or Netiquette (Network Etiquette). As a Board member or staff in this organization you are expected to comport yourself with the utmost of professionalism and decorum in your interactions. The following points should act as guidelines to help you communicate more effectively and appropriately online.

SAVE A TREE

One of the purposes of email is to reduce the usage of paper. Rather than printing messages, develop a filing system for the emails you wish to keep and delete those you don't. Encourage communication by email rather than snail mail by including your email address in all your communication. Save your important messages in a separate folder to maintain a record; emails are legal documents.

CHECK YOUR MAILBOX REGULARLY

The immediacy of email is lost if it sits in your mailbox for an inordinately long period. Always reply promptly, even if all you do is just acknowledge receipt.

MISREPRESENTATION

Don't purport yourself to be someone you're not. Never use someone else's account or send anonymous mail. However, the forging of email addresses by SPAMmers and viruses has become commonplace.

HIGH PRIORITY

Use your mail program's priority function wisely and avoid using 'important' or 'urgent' in the **Subject:** field. Don't cry wolf. Don't expect instant responses to all your messages but you should expect timely ones.

Cc Bcc

Email is the electronic evolution of a written memorandum as can still be seen with the header fields **To:**, **Cc:** and **Subject:**. When sending an email to more than one person, using the **Cc:** (**Carbon Copy**) option will assure that all the recipients you list will receive the same message. Only copy those whom you feel REALLY need to receive it; don't waste people's time. In general, use the **To:** field for the primary recipient(s); **Cc:** for those who aren't active participants and don't have to reply; and **Bcc:** (**Blind Carbon Copy**): for those individuals who may wish to retain their anonymity. Although it is considered a breach of netiquette to give out other people's email addresses, deliberately or not, without their permission; the use of

Bcc: should be limited to avoid the appearance of clandestine agendas. (Note - If all the recipients are to be under the **Bcc:** header you can type your own address in the **To:** field or use a mail merge.)

SUBJECT

Try to make the subject line informative to both you and the recipient. It makes it easier for the individual to locate the message, determine its importance, and later, to prioritize their messages. If you're responding to another message, your **Subject:** field should be the same preceded with RE:.

CONTENT

Reading off a screen is more difficult than printed matter. So keep your messages short and concise. Format long messages with paragraph headers or separate them with an extra space to improve legibility. Make use of bullets or numbering to distinguish your points. If you have multiple, distinct, topics send multiple messages even if they're to the same person. It helps the recipient manage the messages more effectively. If you're requesting computer help you must provide system-specific information with your request if you hope for a qualified response. List all the system specifics first, then describe the problem or state your question.

KNOW YOUR SUBJECT

Double-check your facts. Bad information propagates like wildfire in cyberspace and once it's been through a couple of iterations the distortion effect multiplies. At the same time don't be afraid to share your knowledge with other cybernauts. It's why the Internet was founded in the first place.

FORMATTING

Limit your use of text formatting features (colors, backgrounds, etc.) not all email software handles formatted messages well. When in doubt stick to plain text.

URLs

Most mail software will render clickable URLs when you type a web address in a message. Just be sure you include the <http://> prefix portion of the address.

SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

In email, using all caps is the equivalent of yelling so reserve its use for emphasis only. Also, languages sometimes differ slightly in the spelling of certain words from nation to nation. Use your program's spell checker and make sure you have used proper grammar and punctuation. Avoid cluttering your messages with acronyms, abbreviations and/or emoticons unless you're sure the recipient will understand your intent. The following are tables to help you decipher some common abbreviations and emoticons (turn you head to the left to decipher the emoticons) in case you get some in your mail:

ABBREV.	MEANING
BCNU	Be seeing you

EMOTICON	MEANING
: -)	Smiley face

BTW	By the way
FWIW	For what it's worth
FYI	For your information
IMHO	In my humble opinion
OBO	Or best offer
ROTFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
RTFM	Read the funny manual
TNSTAAFL	There's no such thing as a free lunch
TTFN	Ta ta for now
TTYL	Talk to you later
2L8	Too late
TIA	Thanks in advance
AAMOF	As a matter of fact
AFAIK	As far as I know
B4N	Bye for now
CMIIW	Correct me if I'm wrong
CUL	See you later
KWIM	Know what I mean?
IKWUM	I know what you mean

;-)	Wink (light sarcasm)
:	Indifference
:->	Devilish grin (heavy sarcasm)
8-)	Eye-glasses
:-D	Shock or surprise
:-/	Perplexed
:-(Frown (anger or displeasure)
:-P	Wry smile
;}	Leer
:-Q	Smoker
:-e	Disappointment
:&	Tongue-tied
:-@	Scream
:-O	Yell
:-*	Drunk
;*}	Kiss
:-{}	Wears lipstick
:-	Male
>-	Female

MIND YOUR MANNERS

Always maintain a professional approach. Good manners cost nothing, so use them. When someone makes a mistake be kind in your response. Give people the benefit of the doubt and never be arrogant or self-righteous. The person you are conversing with may be having a genuine misunderstanding or may simply be having a really bad day. A friendly response often changes their entire attitude. Human communication is such a tenuous thing; a single word can often mean the difference between getting your message across or destroying a relationship. Be tolerant especially with network newbies; we've all been one. Everyone makes mistakes, including you, so do unto others...

PROOFREAD

Proof your message before you send it to be certain it conveys the message properly. Once sent you can't get it back. Filling in the **To:** field last will keep you from accidentally sending e-mail prematurely.

ATTACHMENTS

Ask before sending attachments; some recipients won't open attachments because of the risk of viruses. Try to keep the size of the attachments below 100 KB for dial up users and 2 MB for high speed. Large attachments can cause a performance slowdown and delay of delivery. Endeavor to split up large attachments and/or compress them and scan for viruses when possible. Disable the preview window in your mail software to ensure viruses aren't unknowingly executed. Be aware that most wireless devices don't have the software required to view an attachment.

REPLY TO ALL

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each recipient of the original message.

THREADS

When replying to a message, use the [Reply:](#) option instead of creating a new one so that the original message or part of it is included to maintain continuity. Break the quoted message down to the relevant parts and address different points separately. It's entirely possible people will read your response to a message before reading the original. Proceed each line of previous messages with a '>', '>>', '>>>', etc. for each level of messages.

FORWARDING

Never paste someone else's text, in whole or part, into a message and send it as if you've written it. This is plagiarism. If necessary get the original author's permission before sending it. Also, delete the list of previous email addresses to preserve the privacy of the previous recipients.

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS

Your reply must answer all the originator's questions and anticipate further questions if possible. If you don't answer all their questions in the original message you will receive further emails regarding the unanswered questions wasting everyone's time

SIGNATURES

Make it a habit to include a brief signature following your message. Sometimes the your name and your email address are not always readily clear to the recipient especially if the header is complex.

CHAIN LETTERS

Don't send 'junk mail' or chain letters, it's considered SPAM and can inspire a negative response (a flame).

FLAMES

'Flaming' is when someone expresses a strongly held opinion without censoring themselves and containing their emotions. Don't send abusive or defamatory

messages and avoid confrontation if possible. Apart from being discourteous or worse it can be against the law. Remember the laws of the land relating to written communication apply to email as well (copyright, freedom of information, fraudulent misrepresentation, defamation, obscenity, and wrongful discrimination among others). Profanity, off-color or sexually explicit jokes/stories are typically verboten as well. You have no control over where your message goes once your recipient reads it. There's a good chance it'll come back to haunt you. Consider if you would say it to the person's face. If not, don't write it.

MISDIRECTION

There's no such thing as a private email. Understand that anyone in the chain of distribution could get to see your message; accidents happen. It can be forwarded without your consent, someone might hack into the mail system(s) or it might even end up going to someone other than the one(s) you intended. Don't use email to discuss confidential information.