

Netiquette, or network etiquette, is concerned with the "proper" way to communicate in an online environment. Consider the following "rules," adapted from Virginia Shea's [The Core Rules of Netiquette](#), whenever you communicate in the virtual world.

Rule 1: Remember the Human

The Internet offers its users many benefits; one is the ease in which information can be shared or accessed and in fact, this "information sharing" ~~is~~ ^{is} one of the reasons the Internet was founded. So in the spirit of the Internet's "founding fathers," share what you know! When you post a question and receive intelligent answers, share the results with others. Are you an expert at something? ~~Post~~ ^{Post} sources and references about your subject matter. Recently expanded your knowledge about a subject that might be of interest to others? Share that as well.

Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control

What is meant by "flaming" and "flame wars?" "Flaming" ~~is~~ ^{is} what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back any emotion." (Shea, 1994). As an example, think of the kinds of passionate comments you might read on a sports blog. While "flaming" is not necessarily forbidden in virtual ~~communication~~ ^{communication}, "flame wars," when two or three people exchange angry posts between one another, must be controlled or the camaraderie of the group could be compromised. Don't feed the flames; extinguish them by guiding the discussion back to a more productive ~~direction~~ ^{direction}.

Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy

Depending on what you are reading in the virtual world, be it an online class discussion forum, Facebook page, or an email, you may be exposed to some private or personal information that needs to be ~~handled~~ ^{handled} with care. Perhaps someone is sharing some medical news about a loved one or discussing a situation at work. What do you think would happen if this information "got into the wrong hands?" Embarrassment? Hurt feelings? Loss of a job? Just as you ~~others~~ ^{others} respect your privacy, so should you respect the privacy of others. Be sure to err on the side of caution when deciding to discuss or not to discuss virtual communication.

Rule 9: Don't abuse your power

Just like in ~~face~~ ^{face}-to-face situations, there ~~are~~ ^{are} people in cyberspace who have more "power" than others. They have more expertise in technology or they have years of experience in a particular skill or subject matter. Maybe it's you who possesses all of this knowledge and power! Just remember: knowing ~~more~~ ^{more} than others do or having more power than others may have does not give you the right to take advantage of anyone. Think of Rule 1: Remember the human.

Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes

Not everyone has the same amount of ~~experience~~ ^{experience} in the virtual world. And not everyone knows the rules of netiquette. At some point, you will see a stupid question, read an unnecessarily long response, or encounter misspelled words; when this happens, practice kindness and forgiveness as you ~~would~~ ^{would} someone would do if you had committed the same offense. If it's a minor "offense," you might want to let it slide. If you feel compelled to respond to a mistake, do so in a private email rather than a public forum.

Adapted from [The Core Rules of Netiquette](#) Shea, V. (1994). Core rules of netiquette. *Netiquette* (Online ed., pp. 32-45). San Francisco: Albion Books.