Netiquette Guidelines for Online Discussion

Discussion is an integral part of the online learning environment and help instructors to evaluate students' learning and determine where gaps are. Through online discussion, learners can deepen their understanding of material covered, discover viewpoints different from their own, and may learn to question their own conceptions and resolve conflicts between opposing ideas. However, sometimes we might find that miscommunications or challenges arise. In order to make sure that online discussions unfold the way you envision them to go, communicate your expectations with your students by creating a netiquette – the idea is that you establish expectations the same way you would in an in-person class.

The **following tips for interacting online** in emails and/or Discussion Board posts are adapted from guidelines originally compiled in by Chuq Von Rospach & Gene Spafford. Feel free to add these tips to your syllabus or the Discussion Board in your course, as needed:

- Remember that the person receiving your message is someone like you, someone who deserves and appreciates courtesy and respect.
- Be brief. Succinct, thoughtful messages have the greatest impact.
- Your messages reflect on YOU. Take time to make sure that you are proud of your content.
- Use descriptive subject headings in e-mail messages.
- Think about to whom you are responding and the relevance of your messages.
- Be careful with humor and sarcasm; without the voice inflections and body language of face-to-face communication, internet messages can be easily misinterpreted.
- When making follow-up comments, summarize the parts of the message to which you are responding.
- Avoid repeating what has already been said. Needless repetition is ineffective communication.

These tips are a starting point if you do not have anything in terms of expectation for online discussion yet – however, feel free to personalize the netiquette as you see fit for your teaching needs.

An additional resource from Colorado State University outlines [12 Ground Rules for Online Discussion](#).