

Introduction

There are many different ways to communicate on-line nowadays from chat rooms, forums to e-mail, instant messaging, blogs and personal spaces. Some have clearly stated rules and some depend on unwritten codes of behaviour. Here are a few general tips provided by [Ignatia de Waard](http://scope.lidc.sfu.ca/user/view.php?id=1454&course=8) (<http://scope.lidc.sfu.ca/user/view.php?id=1454&course=8>) that will hopefully make those occasions where learning and teaching are taking place more worthwhile.

Considerations

- **Welcome a member** when they join a discussion or enter a chat room / forum and be helpful if they are trying to catch up on the debate.
- **Be courteous and considerate in what you write.** Please refrain from harsh comments. Written words have the tendency to come across a bit harsher than when the same words would be spoken out loud. Different cultures or backgrounds can also result in different language nuances.
- **Only post relevant questions and/or answers.** Keep your remarks on topic to ensure professionalism throughout the forums.
- **Use a clear title in your comments and answers.** This will enable easy retrieval of specific topics afterwards (titles of comments are always readable) and will ease reading through discussions for your colleagues and yourself.
- **Be clear and concise in your written comments.** Avoid general terms if possible. A lot of us are not native English speakers, which means some of our nuances can get lost in translation. Keeping it simple always helps.
- **Include arguments in your comments.** Do not just disagree or agree with your colleague. Disagree or agree while adding well-founded arguments (facts or references rather than mere opinions) in order to give your colleague a better understanding of your train of thought.
- **Be tolerant with the comments you read.** Do not feel threatened by the language that is used even if you feel the comment is offensive; ask the author what he or she meant specifically before jumping to conclusions.
- **Do not use capital letters unless for abbreviations.** Capitals letters are considered shouting on the Internet.
- **Avoid language that uses abbreviations,** for example writing 'bcoz' instead of 'because' as not all people will understand the short form. Be aware that 'smileys' or similar symbols :) are not always recognised and may sound like 'colon, greater than, right parentheses to a screen reader user.
- **In the event a rude or threatening message is addressed to you, do not respond.** Inform the tutor (if he or she has not already seen it themselves). Be the wiser person and neglect the remark or mail.

- **Quote only that part of the comment which is necessary to better understand your reply on a comment.** This enables your colleagues to quickly relate to what you are saying/answering in accordance to the previous comment.
- **If a discussion is not on topic, do not answer it.** In case a discussion is off topic the tutor will post it/move it to the relevant discussion forum, or will simply delete it.

Additional Resources

- Guidelines on surviving a forum. Atma Xplorer explain the meaning of a forum as well as offering advice on netiquette on forums. <http://www.atmaxplorer.com/2008/02/online-etiquette-101-forums/>
- Accessify Forum: Accessibility discussion forums covering many subjects related to making on-line communication easier to use and accessible. <http://www.accessifyforum.com/>

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