

Netiquette Guide

1. **Remember the Human** – Communicating online has many benefits but one significant downside is that it can depersonalise the interaction. Remember that you are communicating with a human on the other end of your email or Teams message. With this in mind, you shouldn't say anything in writing that you wouldn't say to someone's face. It is important to remember that online communications are nearly always saved or backed up and if you say anything inappropriate there is every chance that this could be disclosable. In addition, it is important to be mindful that written communication (without the benefit of tone, facial expressions, and body language) can be more easily misinterpreted than in-person communication. Make sure that you consider how your message will be received by the reader and consider having more challenging or sensitive conversations over the phone or by video call.
2. **Respect other people's time** – Remember that not everyone has the same schedule and priorities when it comes to their work. You can be respectful of your colleague's free time and wellbeing by avoiding scheduling online meetings over lunch time or outside of core working hours. Consider implementing a policy of 'meeting free Fridays' to give colleagues the opportunity to catch-up on work that has built up throughout the week. If you don't get an immediate response via your chosen method of communication, avoid using another communication method as a means to chase that person for a response. If they haven't had a chance to respond to your email, the chances are that they don't have time to jump on an unscheduled call!
3. **Set boundaries** – Working from home can sometimes blur the boundaries between work and home life. To try to maintain your own boundaries, don't give out your personal phone or email address for work related communications. Let others know that you don't expect a reply outside of their usual working hours, by including this message in your email signature. Try to role model this behaviour yourself, or use the delay email function if sending emails outside of normal working hours/at weekends.
4. **Consider the appropriate communication method** – It is important to distinguish between Asynchronous and Synchronous communications when identifying the appropriate communication method. Asynchronous communication is via methods that do not provide an immediate response, including emails. Whereas Synchronous online communication more closely resembles face-to-face communication and involves two or more people in a 'live' discussion. This can be via instant message platforms such as Microsoft Teams, or live sessions including webcams and microphones, such as a Zoom or Microsoft Teams meeting. If wanting to engage in Synchronous communication, consider whether the other person is available to do so, for example check that their Microsoft Teams status is set to 'available', or pre-arrange a suitable time to schedule a call. Bear in mind that not every call needs to be a video call, particularly if you are contacting the person without prior warning! A phone call (that doesn't include video) is still a valid way to communicate and people shouldn't be made to feel pressured into putting their video on. If your message does not require or allow for an instant response, consider using Asynchronous communication, such as email. Having all such messages in one place will make it easier for the receiver to manage their workload.
5. **Set expectations for online meetings** – Agree at the start of the meeting how participants should engage with the technology. For example, ask participants to mute their microphones when not speaking, and to use the 'raise hand' function before contributing verbally. Don't record the meeting without prior warning and/or consent from participants. Consider the role of the chat function in your meetings and set clear expectations at the

outset. You may use the chat function for questions or to gain consensus on a point of discussion but bear in mind that the presenter cannot always see what's happening in the chat box. In addition, be mindful of initiating or contributing to 'side discussions' in the chat box, whilst someone else is speaking or presenting. You wouldn't have these 'side discussions' in an in-person setting and it can be distracting for others in the meeting who are trying to listen to the speaker.