

# NET ETIQUETTE IN GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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A White Paper

by

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A Student Resource

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

This white paper sto provide guidance two students in graduate theological education on the matter of Internet communication, frequently styled, "net etiquette."

### **Netiquette**

"Netiquette" refers to Internet etiquette. This simply means "the use of good manners in online communication such as e-mail, forums, blogs, and social networking sites to name a few."

### **Problems**

Net etiquette is important because online communication is notoriously dangerous for failing to. communicate. The reason for this failure is that, with few exceptions, postings in a university or graduate school course online, or in another online forum, are nonverbal communications. It doesn't take quantitative research methods to discover the importance of Internet etiquette nor the calamities that can come from just one misunderstood online message. in fact, as the Internet is moving from infancy to early adolescence in higher education it is becoming more popular, more widely used, and, therefore, a veritable laboratory for communication errors. Most of us have suffered in some way as a result of our own miscommunication. I know that I have. The addition of emoticons (smiley faces, ☺, etc.) serve to explain the emotional background behind the sentence, replacing raised eyebrows, smiles, frowns, tongue-in-cheek expressions, and other very verbal and visible expressions that help us to communicate. The problem with emoticons is that in the. higher education discussion boards most institutions, and most professors, including the author of this article, expect that postings be Donne in academic language. There are, however, other areas of online learning in graduate education in which the more common elements, i.e. emoticons, may be used.

## Solutions

The response to the problem boils down to courtesy. However, because there are several mediums with a continuum of form to informal, business to academic, there are unique standards for each sector. Our concern is becoming a solid digital citizen in the graduate theological seminary environment. This calls for attention to strong postings in discussion board areas and a nimble ability to lighten it up a bit for less academically formal forums, like chats with other students or the professor.

Remember that online posting and graduate theological education is concerned with an academic tone, that is employing the courtesies and awareness of limitations of this new medium. In short, right well. When responding, summarize without assuming you know the motive of the other student. Alternatively, it is difficult to commend an attitude in such forums, however, one may and should commend good written work that exhibits theological reflection, critical thinking, and strong, logical conclusions.

Here are some other common net etiquette communication tips that we expect our students to practice.

- "Especially in business and career-related online communications netiquette should be used to ensure that correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation are put in place to project professionalism."
- Avoid emoticons in academic posts (discussion board assignments).
- Netiquette allow for the use of emoticons (such as :) :( ;) and others) to explain an emotion in informal forums.
- In e-mail, netiquette means not flooding someone's inbox with forwarded messages or spam mail.

### **Consider these Ten Rules of Net Etiquette:**

The Core Rules of Netiquette are excerpted from the book *Netiquette* by Virginia Shea.<sup>1</sup> Click on each rule for elaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> "Netiquette, by Virginia Shea, Table of Contents and Welcome Page," accessed November 13, 2018,

- [Introduction](#)
- [Rule 1: Remember the Human](#)
- [Rule 2: Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life](#)
- [Rule 3: Know where you are in cyberspace](#)
- [Rule 4: Respect other people's time and bandwidth](#)
- [Rule 5: Make yourself look good online](#)
- [Rule 6: Share expert knowledge](#)
- [Rule 7: Help keep flame wars under control](#)
- [Rule 8: Respect other people's privacy](#)
- [Rule 9: Don't abuse your power](#)
- [Rule 10: Be forgiving of other people's mistakes](#)

### Resources<sup>2</sup>

Why Do People Use Netiquette?

[http://www.ehow.com/about\\_4609432\\_why-do-people-use-netiquette.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_4609432_why-do-people-use-netiquette.html)

This website gives a succinct explanation of what Netiquette is, how it can be implemented, and the benefits of using Netiquette. It also provides links to EHow.com articles on netiquette.

Netiquette Home Page

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>

This is a very comprehensive website that includes a link to the online edition of Netiquette by Virginia Shea. It also includes a netiquette quiz and mailing list subscription.

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<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Parts of the resource list relies on Auburn University's "Citizenship" program. See <https://www.auburn.edu/citizenship/netiquette.html>.

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