

“Netiquette” Electronic Communications Etiquette and Safety

By Kim Maxwell “The Etiquette Lady”

Telecommunication skills are a must in the twenty-first century with new technology connecting us to more and more hardware and software that both ease and complicate our lives. We must remember that these devices are designed to connect us to individuals who still have very human feelings and perceptions.

Cell Phones/PDA’s

Cell phones and PDA’s can be a lifesaver in an emergency. It can also be a real nuisance to the people around you. 58% of America’s youth have cell phone and 24% of those feel they have to answer a call *no matter what*. Please let me assure you that the simple ringing of your cell phone *does not mean you must answer it!*

There are many places and occasions where it is simply inappropriate to take a call from anyone except a parent.

- In general, anytime your use of an electronic device is going to disturb other people, either turn it off or move to a place where it won’t disturb anyone.
- Always turn off your electronic devices when in public places so as not to disturb those around you (movie theatres, church, restaurants, school, the dinner table, waiting in line, etc).

- If your cell rings and you *must* take the call, please ask the people you are with “do you mind if I take this call” and wait for their answer. . . maybe they “*do*” mind. You can always tell the caller that you will call them back later at a more appropriate time.
- Safety first! Never give a stranger your personal information, e-mail address, home address, cell number, etc.
- Follow the “rules of the house” that your parents have set for the use of electronic devices. They care about your safety and well-being. Don’t disappoint them!

E-Mail

When writing an e-mail, you may think that the message is only between you and the person you are writing, but your e-mail is far from private. Once you hit that “send” button, your message is traveling unprotected through cyberspace where anyone with the know-how can pick it up. So consider your message to be as public as a billboard.

- Never write hurtful or harmful messages containing insults, gossip or unnecessarily strong opinions. Remember the Golden Rule.
- Keep in mind that chain letters are illegal and so is sending copyrighted material or another person’s thoughts and ideas and calling them your own – also known as stealing.
- When sending messages over the internet, it is imperative to be clear in your communication. Using acronyms, abbreviations and even slang can be confusing to your reader.
- Always use spell check for proper grammar and spelling.
- Make sure you include the proper topic in your subject line so your recipient will know what to expect.
- Never email in ALL CAPS – this is considered shouting – definitely not appropriate behavior.
- Do not type in all lowercase either. Always use proper English, spelling, grammar, punctuation and sentence form.

- Please beware of internet predators. If you receive an inappropriate message, please notify your parents at once. Never reply to a message from an unknown sender. Delete it immediately.
- Never seek out inappropriate websites.

Text Messaging “TM” – Instant Messaging “IM”

Messaging is the utmost definition of instant communication, even more so than e-mails. They're just like being on the phone with someone, except that you're typing all your messages. All the rules of “Netiquette” apply to messaging as well. Use common sense.