

Your Guide to **Online Communication**

Netiquette refers to rules of etiquette that apply to online communication with your tutors. Studies have consistently shown that successful students are those who can communicate effectively and are able to access their tutors to address learning challenges and receive feedback.

This manual is designed to help you communicate successfully in the AOU online learning environment.

General AOU Netiquette Rules

1 Be Scholarly

- Use academic language, grammar, and spelling
- Your communication should be considerate, with disagreements only based on scholarly ideas or research evidence.

2 Be Respectful

- The privacy of others must be respected;
- You need to respect the tutor schedule (posted on the course LMS page), contacting your tutors outside working schedule is not appropriate unless agreed upon with the tutor
- You need to avoid sharing personal or professional information about classmates.
- You need to respect diversity and opinions that differ from your own.

3 Be Professional

- Everyone should strive to look their best online.
- Truthfulness, accuracy, and running a final spell check are appropriate expectations for AOU students.
- Writing in a clear font and limiting the use of emoticons is essential in a professional and educational environment.

4 Be Polite

- Address your tutors by their appropriate title and name posted on your course LMS page.
- Address your colleagues in class by name and be mindful of their writing tone.
- Interact politely online, just as you would be expected to do in a physical classroom environment.



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Messaging & Discussion forum Netiquette Rules

Common Messaging and discussion forum rules, in addition to the use of proper spelling and grammar, are:

1 Read all comments on the group before posting

- During a group discussion you need to contribute by adding ideas / information to the discussion and not by repeating what others have already posted.
- Before posting your question about the course or an assignment / assessment (TMA, MTA or final exam), check if anyone has asked it already and received a reply from the tutor.

2 Be clear and stay on topic

- Be clear about what you are saying so that it is not misunderstood.
- Read your words before posting to test the clarity of your message.
- Don't post irrelevant links, comments, or pictures that are not related to the course.

3 Be mindful of your tone

- The tone of your messages should be polite and display respect for others.
- Don't type in ALL CAPS! In writing, it will look like you are shouting.
- Don't write anything that sounds angry or sarcastic, even as a joke, because without hearing your tone of voice, your peers or tutor might not realize you are joking.

4 Be credible

- Do not mislead other students by providing information that might not be accurate about the course
- If your response is an opinion or guess, state that clearly.
- Be sure to give credit where it is due by citing sources, providing links, or crediting the ideas of other classmates.

5 Respect diversity

- Recognize that other students may have different cultural backgrounds and skill levels when writing in English.
- Treat others with respect, regardless of race, gender, political and religious beliefs.
- Be respectful when opinions differ from your own; disagree in a polite manner. If you feel the need to disagree, do so respectfully and acknowledge the valid points in your classmate's argument. Acknowledge that others are entitled to have their own perspective on the issue.



RULE OF THUMB

If you wouldn't do or say something in person, don't say or write it online either.

Online session netiquette rules

1 Join the session early

up to 5 minutes before the session start time.

2 Mute your microphone

(unless your tutor asks you to unmute) as soon as you sign on and whenever you are not speaking. This is important and perhaps the most critical tip on this list to avoid background noise and distractions for other students. You might want to use a headset with an external mic for best hearing and speaking capabilities.

3 Turn off your camera

(unless your tutor asks you to turn the camera on) if you need to turn on your camera, make sure that there is nothing in the background that may distract other students.

4 Good Lighting

Have good lighting on your face so you can be seen clearly, Adjust your camera to be at around eye level if possible.

5 Close unneeded applications

Keep your BBB platform open and do not navigate to other tabs or web pages unless directed by your tutor. Make sure that the virtual session given by your tutor is your main screen.

6 Focus and engage

It is easy to get distracted on your computer. Remember that this is a class. You are responsible for the material presented in class. When you are speaking, let others know that you are finished by saying one of these sign-offs: "That's all." "I'm done." "Thank you." So that everyone knows you have finished your comments. If you want to speak, physically raise your hand or use the "raise hand" feature. You can ask questions and make comments silently if desired using the "Chat" feature.

7 Loss of power/WiFi access during a virtual class.

You need to contact the tutor immediately if you experience a loss of power or Wifi access during class. If the tutor loses connection during a class wait for a minimum of 10 minutes before disconnecting.

8 Sign Out

Remember to sign out or "leave the meeting" when the session is finished.



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