

## SAMPLE ONLINE ETIQUETTE POLICY

**Note to faculty: This section can be incorporated in your syllabus, posted on your Blackboard course page, and/or you can send it out as a message to your students.**

In an online environment, it is essential that utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. In our virtual discussions, avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different ideas. Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

### Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

**Respect:** A web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom would also be inappropriate in a web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor. Keep in mind that the person contributing to the discussion may be new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

**Think First, Post Later:** Think carefully about the content of your message before posting it. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

**Edit Your Work:** The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor and proofread before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obscure to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

**Follow the Parameters and Stick to the Point:** Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. You need to stick to the point. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.