Netiquette: Professionalism Online
Mandl School: the College of Allied Health

In our modern age, digital communication has become a central part of professional life. Online distance learning is a good practice for digital etiquette in the workplace, which includes communication via email and other online platforms.

One of the challenges with "netiquette" is that digital communication can limit how we deliver information to our audience. Because they cannot see our body language nor hear our voice, it can be easy to misconstrue what we say. Also, online communication does not disappear; it can be archived, saved, printed out, or forward to someone else. So when we communicate online, we have to be very careful about what we say and how we say it. We want to be the best communicators we can be when we talk to people online, whether that be our professor in a class or a patient on the job. Great communication is a key to success.

Here are 10 tips to keep your "netiquette" top-notch:

1. Always begin formal communications by politely addressing the reader. (For example: "Hello Prof. Smith,")
2. Be clear about the purpose of the communication from the outset. Be polite but direct.
3. Use "please" when making requests. A little politeness can help a lot.
4. Avoid ranting. Part of professional communication is keeping things simple and focused on the crucial details. When we let our emotions get carried away, that prevents good communication.
5. Never use profanity. Name-calling and swear words compromise your credibility. Many institutions (including Mandl) have policies against them; violating these policies could get you suspended or dismissed. Every person deserves to be treated with respect.
6. Avoid using CAPS, **bold**, and exclamation points (!). These can sometimes be misconstrued as yelling.
7. Say "thank you." Again, politeness makes you look better.
8. When ending an email, use a polite sign-off and your name. (For example: Sincerely, Josey Cruz)
9. After you have sent an email or message, be patient. It may take the professor or other professional some time to get back to you. Give them an appropriate amount of time before following up.
10. Similarly, when participating in a discussion board or group email, take your turn but try to not dominate the conversation. You want to contribute, but you also want to allow your peers to contribute.

Keep these details in mind when you communicate online. Remember, you are part of a professional and educational community. You want to be a positive presence in that community, because it will help everyone be their best as well.