



NETWORK ETIQUETTE

When using Internet email, bulletin boards, chat rooms, discussion centers, and newsgroups for classroom purposes, keep in mind that children of all ages may be communicating with one another. Users must refrain from inappropriate behavior, which would include the use of defamatory remarks, caustic comments, indecent materials, or ethnic, religious, racial, or sexual disparagement. If a question regarding the appropriateness of placing material on the Internet arises, ask: "Would this material be suitable for my classroom?"

Tone and Intent

Keep in mind many of the features which normally accompany spoken language are missing from text-based conversations. Humor can easily be misinterpreted on the Internet not only because of the limitations of text-based conversations, but also due to differing cultural backgrounds between sender and receiver.

The absence of these features can lead to miscommunication regarding meaning or intent. To compensate, network users have adopted their own vocabulary. A colon, dash, and an end parentheses can be used to create a sideways smiling face. :-)

You may know of some others:

;-) = wink

:-(= sad

:-0 = astonishment

8-) = glasses

(()) = hug/embrace

Mail Security

Items which are posted on newsgroups and blogs are considered to be public while electronic mail is private. However, it is generally a good idea to avoid putting anything in an electronic mail message which you wouldn't want others to read. Virginia's Public Education Network is not a secure military network, nor is the Internet in general.

There are several ways in which technologic mix-ups can result in your email being seen by others. For example, if the electronic address on a message is invalid, it may be routed to a system administrator who may attempt to manually determine the proper routing. (You will receive a system message if your message cannot be delivered.) Also, it is quite possible that the person receiving your message could accidentally forward your message to someone else. Plus, your email can be read by hackers unless you encrypt it, and most of us never do this because if the password is lost, the email can't be retrieved.

Newsgroup Traditions

Keep in mind that postings to national newsgroups may be read by millions of users around the world. The Internet has truly created a global village. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the level of newsgroup to which you are posting. Local newsgroups are only posted on their local Virginia node, statewide newsgroups will be read by educators throughout the state, and national newsgroups may be read around the world.

Read a newsgroup or other site that allows postings for a month or two before you begin posting new articles. It can be frustrating for other readers to see an item posted which is not related to the content of the newsgroup, or which was extensively discussed the week before.

You can use the search function to search newsgroups for subjects of interest.

Keep in mind, in the case of national/international newsgroups, that those from other cultures may not share the same assumptions and frames of reference which are common to the United States. These differences can form a rewarding basis for instructional interchanges but can also be the basis for misunderstandings. Remember that a sense of humor can go a long way in helping people to understand one another. The Internet is a place for serious discussion, but remember that there are human beings at the other end.