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Online Etiquette and more...

Mama always said — wait, we didn't have a computer growing up and Mom never covered this. When the subject is online etiquette, we're in uncharted territory.

For the most part, cyberspace is a pretty easygoing place. The general rule of thumb is "No harm, no foul." But knowing the DOs and DON'Ts of cyberspace is like having good table manners. There may be times when you can forget them, but it's generally wise to know and honor them. So consider this Online Etiquette 101:

If you don't have something nice to say...

Don't say it, and for goodness sake, don't put it in writing. Candid conversation makes sense online, but use good judgment. An offhand remark behind someone's back is just one click away from being forwarded and landing on the front of that person's computer screen. The next thing you know, everyone knows exactly what you think of your boss or mother-in-law, including your boss or mother-in-law. Yikes!

Listen well

Be sure to read e-mails and message boards before replying and/or posting a message. If you don't look before you leap, you're likely to send or post a reply that is off the mark. In message boards and chat rooms stick to the topic at hand. If you agree with a group email or message board, reply with an informative comment. It's the thought that counts.

Don't yell

Using ALL CAPS is considered poor form. It's the equivalent of YELLING at everyone. It also makes your message more difficult to read. So while it's terrific to relay INFLECTION, make sure you use it sparingly as not to OVERWHELM people.

Add some style

We don't all have the same handwriting and we need not have the same e-mail style. There are all kinds of ways to add personal touches to your online correspondence through color, fonts, links, photos and other graphical images, including the very popular emoticons otherwise known as smileys

One person's junk is another's jewel

Chain letter and junk mail can add up. If you would prefer not to receive chain letters, it's appropriate to send a quick e-mail to the sender saying that while you love staying in touch, you'd prefer not to receive chain letters.

Talk to strangers

Yep, go right ahead. Today's online stranger might be tomorrow's Buddy List pal. But be smart about giving out personal information online (like your home or work address). It's better to keep those facts to yourself. Etiquette tip: don't ask, don't tell.

Don't forget old friends

While you're meeting new friends online, be sure to remember the old ones. A recent AOL Roper Starch poll indicates more than 40% of people online have connected with someone from their past. The average length of time they'd been out of touch was 12 years! So think back...way back.

Here is a list of some basic and most common acronymns you are likely to run into in email, IMs, chats etc...

BRB = Be Right Back
BTW = By The Way
GBTW = Get Back To Work
GFETE = Grinning From Ear To Ear
GMTA = Great Minds Think Alike
IDGI = I Don't Get It
IMHO = In My Humble Opinion
IOW = In Other Words
IRL = In Real Life
IYKWIM = If You Know What I Mean
J/K = Just kidding
KISS = Keep It Simple Stupid
LOL = Laughing Out Loud
REHI = Hello Again (re-Hi!)
ROFL = Rolling On Floor, Laughing
TTYL = Talk To You Later
ZZZ = Sleeping

Some Basic Emoticons

: -)	Basic Smily: This smily is used to inflect a sarcastic or joking statement
;-)	Winky Smily: User just made a flirtatious and/or sarcastic remark. More of a "don't hit me for what I just said" Smily
:- (Frowning Smily: User did not like that last statement or is upset or depressed about something
8 -)	Sunglass Wearing Smiley
:-P	Smiley With Tongue Sticking Out
:-D	A Laughing (At You!) Smiley
:-X	An Absolute "Lips Are Sealed" Smiley
=-O	Very Surprised Smiley
O:-)	Angelic Smiley