

Listserv Netiquette Top Ten List

1. Remember you are interacting with people.

Because you only see letters stringing across a screen, it is easy to forget, even ignore, that a person sits on the other side of the network. Over the Internet, you should consider yourself as having a face-to-face conversation with someone in a crowded room. Always remember behind every email address is another person.

2. Differentiate between public and private messages.

The listserv is public space. Personal messages, such as criticism of a person's writing style or new scarf should be sent to that person only, if at all. To broadcast such messages on the listserv can embarrass and anger people unnecessarily.

3. Listserv messages go to the entire list.

Remember, if you reply to someone who sent a message via the listserv it goes to that person—and everyone else on the list. Double check the To: line at the top of your email before clicking send.

4. Make the subject lines descriptive.

People should have a flavor of the message from glancing at the subject line. "Acute Care Question" is not as good as "Early Rehab Protocols for CVA."

5. Sign your postings.

It is good practice to include a few lines at the end of your message indicating your name, credentials/title, practice facility, and e-mail address.

6. Be brief.

Say your say succinctly. It will have a greater impact and more people will read it.

7. Write clearly and logically.

Simplicity of expression usually is best.

8. Be prudent with speculation.

On the internet, rumor can grow extravagant and spread like fire. Remarks beginning with, "I have a feeling that . . ." or, "I think that . . ." are usually suspect. Provide evidence and references to support your ideas.

9. Be cautious with humor and sarcasm.

Typed language is naturally colder than spoken language, because it is stripped of voice inflections, body language, and other non-verbal cues. Quite easily, humor can be taken as insult, especially if subtle. Some users prefer to use symbols that hint at tone (emoticons), but it is safest to frankly note satirical messages.

10. Email listservs are as good, and only as good, as the subscribers make them.

Lists work best when people bring fresh knowledge and ideas to the table. New ideas can stimulate discussion. Trivial or inane comments often kill discussion. Write meaty, thoughtful things, backed up with evidence, and everyone will benefit from the list.

These were adapted from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses and the Section on Geriatrics, APTA.