Writing Strategies for Online Learners

As you move into the world of online learning, here are some strategies that will help with online written communication.

Participating in Discussion Forums
At some point, you may need to participate in your class’s discussion forums.

- Keep track when postings are due
- Remember, the quality of your posts is more important than the quantity of your posts.
- Be clear and concise
- Participating in discussion forums may help you feel less isolated. Your peers will appreciate your contributions as you will theirs.
- Sometimes asking a question helps generate a discussion on a topic.
- It may take time to receive a reply, so it’s important to be patient.

Email and Online Postings
It is important to express the main purpose of your message through the subject of the message and the body of the message.

Subject Lines
- Be concise and have a subject line that reflects the content of your message
- Be polite, ensure your subject is NOT IN ALL CAPS
- When introducing a new topic in a discussion thread, change the subject line to reflect the new topic or start a completely new thread
Greetings

Here are some guidelines for choosing a courteous greeting:

- Be courteous in greeting your recipient/s while still maintain professionalism
  - Hi, – this is considered informal and may be appropriate for your peers
  - Hello, – A little more formal and may be appropriate for your instructor and peers
  - Dear, – Is formal and is always considered courteous.

- Close with a courteous greeting
  - Sincerely, – This is an appropriate closing in a formal message
  - Best, – This is a safe way to close your message, it conveys best wishes in a cheerful, professional way.
  - Regards, – This is also a safe, concise and professional way to close your message

Replying to emails and messages

It is important to be mindful of a few things when replying to incoming messages.

- If an incoming message is for multiple recipients, is it necessary to reply to all recipients or just the sender?
- There are three fields to choose from when sending and replying to messages:
  To…Cc…and Bcc…
- ‘To’ is used to reply to the main recipient of your message
- ‘Cc’ stands for Carbon Copy. Entering a recipient’s email address in the Cc field will send a duplicate copy of your email to someone other than the main recipient.
- ‘Bcc’ refers to Blind Carbon Copy. Use this field when you want your message to be private. Anyone attached in the Bcc field will not be able to see the other recipients of whom the email was sent.
• Always double check who you are sending your email to and which field you are using when sending an email or message.

• Sometimes you may want to Cc yourself in a message to see if your email was readable or that your attachments were able to be viewed.

Proofread

It pays to proofread your outgoing messages.

• Before you hit send, check for major spelling errors including names of instructors or your fellow students.

• You can save an outgoing message as a draft and come back to it later if you are unsure about the content of the message.

• Sometimes it helps to read it out loud.

• Also, double check who you are sending your outgoing message to and that you are using the correct field.

Netiquette

Netiquette is the etiquette you use for all your online communication including emails, discussion forums, social media and text messages. Ten core rules of Netiquette are:

1. Remember the human – The person reading your mail is a person, with feelings that can be hurt
2. Adhere to the same standards of behaviour online that you follow in real life
3. Know where you are in cyberspace
4. Respect other people’s time and bandwidth
5. Make yourself look good online
6. Share expert knowledge
7. Help keep flame wars under control
8. Respect other people’s privacy
9. Don’t abuse your power
10. Be forgiving of other people’s mistakes

Clarification on these rules can be found here on The Core Rules of Netiquette by Virginia Shea