

Quick Guide: Netiquette, Cultural Competency, & Professional Communication

September 2020

teachingandlearning@ontariotechu.ca
tlc.ontariotechu.ca



Acknowledging the Land

Ontario Tech University acknowledges the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands in friendship. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississauga, a branch of the great Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

Why use a Land Acknowledgement?

As the journey towards reconciliation at the university continues, and we strive to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) calls to action, it is important that we continue to build relationships and engage in ongoing education. Acknowledging the traditional territory expresses respect, gratitude and appreciation for the Indigenous peoples who have inhabited and continue to live on the land. It is recognition of their presence both in the past and the present. Recognition helps to create a welcome and safe environment for Indigenous students, their families and community members.

When to Use it?

It is good practice to acknowledge the land **whenever you begin a class session or gathering.**

When teaching online, it can be helpful to mention that while the university exists in this particular territory, you and your students may physically be elsewhere, on different territory.

For more information, visit <https://studentlife.ontariotechu.ca/services/community/indigenous/index.php>





Teaching and Learning in the Online Space

Adapting to teaching and learning online can present new challenges. However, we can face those challenges head-on by working respectfully and collaboratively to create a welcoming online space.

 **Be Clear. Be Human. Be Responsible.**



Netiquette
Rules for online interaction



Cultural Competency
Interact with people of different cultures

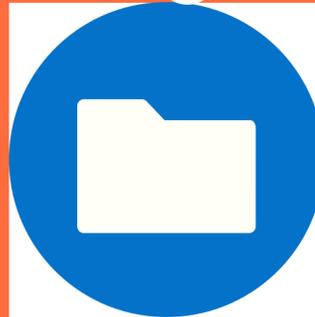


Professional Communication
Communication that is clear and professional

These are various aspects of communicating successfully online.

This guide looks at quick tips to implement them into your learning environment or your teaching practice.

What is Netiquette?



Internet + Etiquette



Netiquette is a short form for "Internet etiquette". It is a guide for how we interact with others online in a safe and respectful manner.



A Code For Polite Behaviour

Demonstrates respect for others in an online setting



There Are No "Official" Rules

There is no single source for all netiquette rules



Often Based in Common Sense

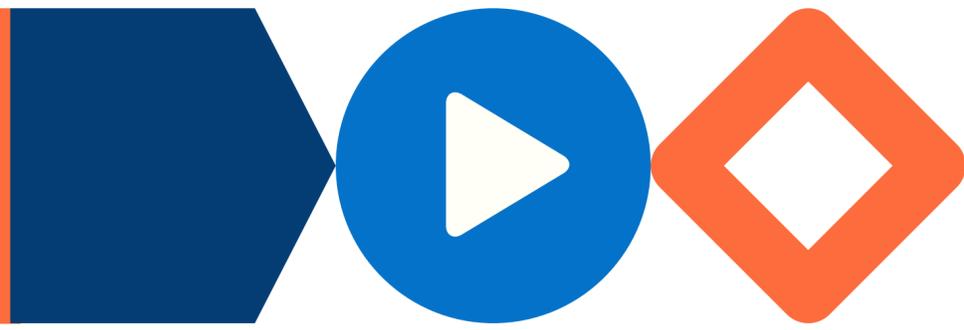
If you wouldn't do it in person, don't do it online



Why Do We Care?

Netiquette encourages positive online interactions, builds trust, promotes respect, and prevents major misunderstandings

Netiquette Tips



Quick Tips

Be Clear

◆ Give explicit instructions

Be clear in what you want someone to do, where, and when. Make sure you indicate important information like:

- Dates (spelled out clearly)
- Times (a.m. versus p.m.)
- Links if appropriate

◆ Avoid figures of speech, sarcasm, etc.

In online communication, we miss out on non-verbal cues, context, and body language. Avoid using figures of speech and sarcasm, and keep things straightforward.

◆ Be accessible

Make navigating your course and documents easier for all students by following Universal Design for Learning, including:

- Using accessible formatting for documents
- Providing video transcripts or closed captions
- Using the university course outline
- Using clear navigation for the course

Be Human

◆ Try synchronous communications tools

Build community in your classes by trying some real-time/synchronous communication tools. Kaltura Virtual Classroom or Google Meet can be used for class sessions, tutorials, or office hours!



Netiquette Tips



Quick Tips

◆ Provide options, and ask for opinions

Let students have input on non-major aspects of the class that impact the feeling of community. These might be:

- Building class schedules for assignments
- Deciding whether to have webcams on or off
- Choosing own groups for group assignments

Be Responsible

◆ Be on time

Be on time for class (bearing technical issues) and make sure classes and other meetings end on time, too. This respects the time of everyone in the class and their various schedules.

◆ Follow through

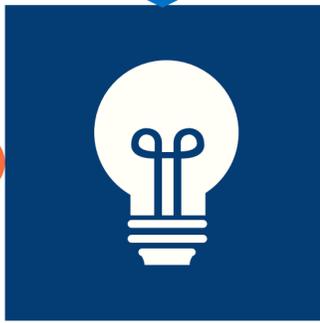
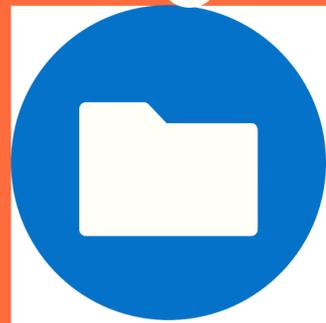
When you make a date for something (e.g., a deadline for return assignment marks, or meeting a professor online for help), make sure you show up when you say you will. This builds trust.

Use Common Sense

Often, netiquette is based on common sense. If you wouldn't do something in person, don't do it online.



What is Cultural Competency?



Understanding Others



Cultural competency is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

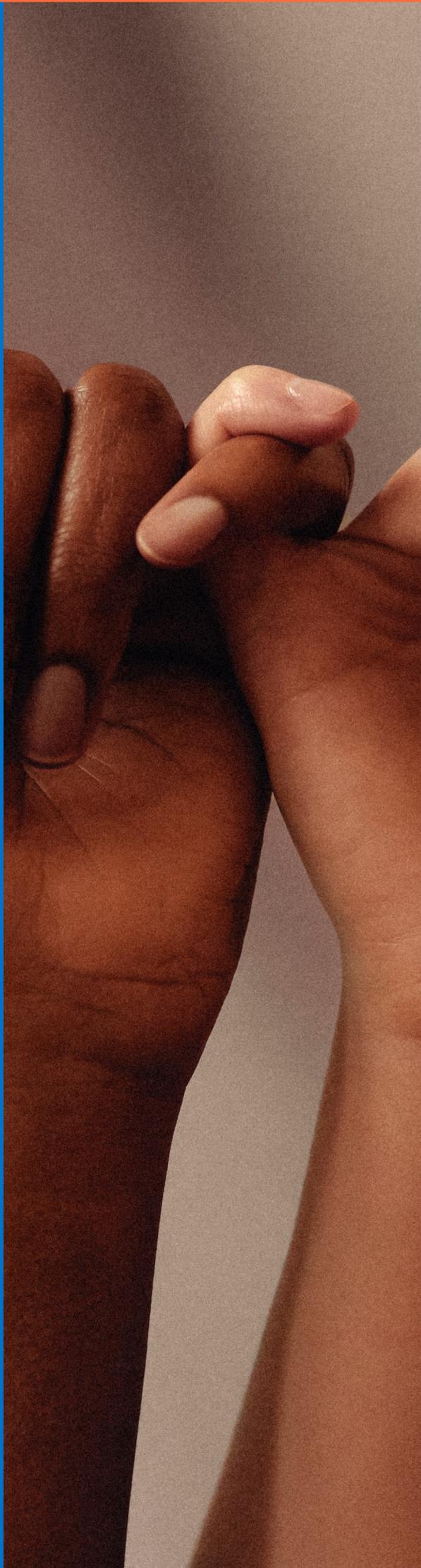
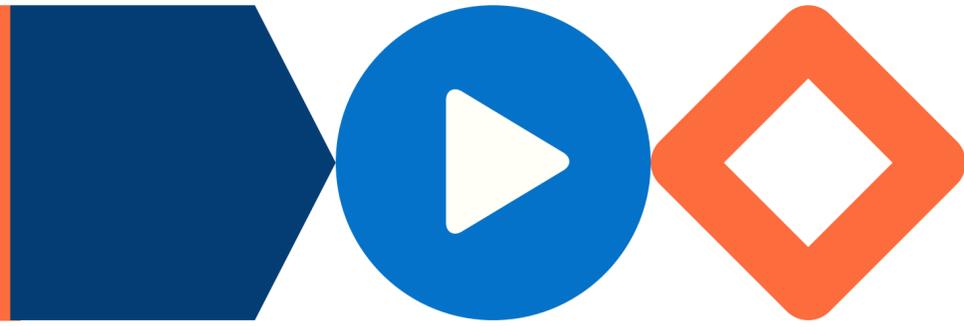


How can we consider how different experiences and viewpoints affect education?

How can we learn about others when we are not in the same physical location?



Cultural Competency



Quick Tips

Be Clear

◆ Be aware of language barriers

Students whose first language is something other than English may not understand idioms, figures of speech, or sarcasm, especially without context. Avoid using these in class or in class documents.

◆ Understand how barriers affect marginalized groups

Being flexible with how students participate in class acknowledges that different groups may have different circumstances and barriers to typical online participation. Consider different circumstances when:

- Using webcam and microphone, or chat
- Planning synchronous vs asynchronous options
- Choice of individual or group work

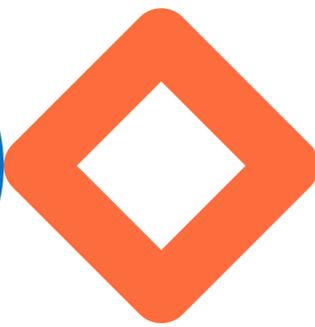
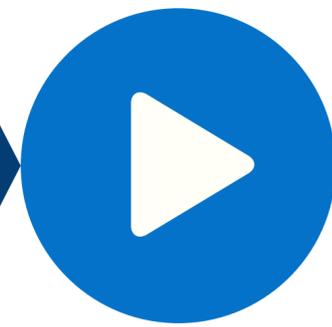
Keep in mind that all students' circumstances may not be the same when planning course activities.

Think About Circumstances

The global pandemic has changed everyone's living, working, and school environments. Students may:

- Have children at home during class or be caring for others in the same room during class
- Be in different time zones than others
- Have unreliable Internet service or device access
- Have additional financial worries or be working one or more jobs

Cultural Competency



Quick Tips

Be Human

◆ Seek to learn more

Become comfortable with the differences that exist between ourselves and those we interact with in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic variables.

◆ Be aware

Class participation and student engagement may look different for students who belong to different cultural groups. Building a collaborative class community code for engagement can put students at ease and give them choices for how they participate.

Be Responsible

◆ Value others' trust

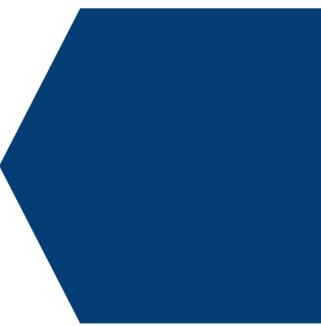
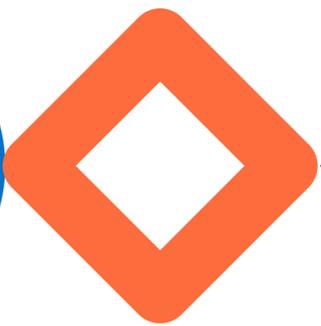
Value the trust that students put in positions of authority or trust at the university. Model good choices and understand that students are looking to you for guidance.

◆ Be understanding

Understand how systemic barriers impact the lives of culturally diverse groups on a daily basis.



To learn more about cultural competency, visit <https://studentlife.ontariotechu.ca/services/equity-and-inclusion/index.php>



Using Webcams

Are webcams a must have for all online courses?



Webcams
on



Webcams
off



Webcams can add a personal element to online courses. People can see those they are talking to. Webcams can also add context to discussions.

Instructors can survey engagement by checking their students' facial expressions.

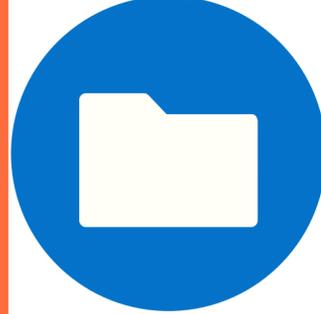
Webcams can capture more than just the student or instructor - any children, family members or others may be captured unintentionally.

Webcams can use a considerable amount of bandwidth or data for those with unstable Internet connections.

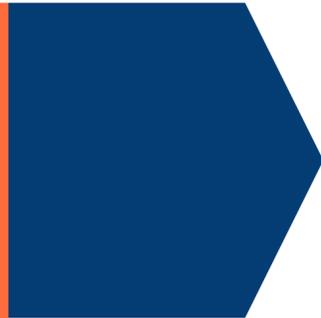
Webcam Alternatives and Suggestions

-  **Encourage work in smaller groups**
Place students in smaller groups rather than the whole class, to let them gain comfort in appearing on a webcam.
 -  **Create community consensus around using webcams**
Gather class input on when it is appropriate to request use of a webcam, and when it isn't. Consider having a system where students can communicate with you that they do not feel comfortable having their camera on.
 -  **Consider alternatives for student engagement**
Create multiple formats for students to engage with the class and the course material, both synchronously and asynchronously. Contact the **Teaching and Learning Centre** for advice and support.
-

What is Professional Communication?



Putting it all together



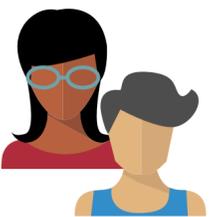
When you communicate professionally, you communicate clearly, respectfully, and competently with anyone in any medium.



Netiquette
Rules for online interaction

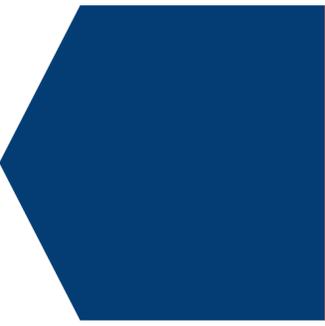
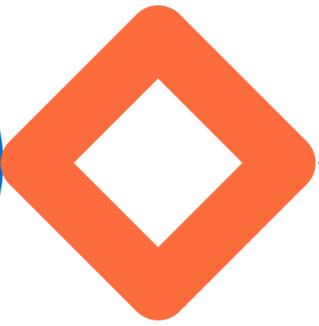
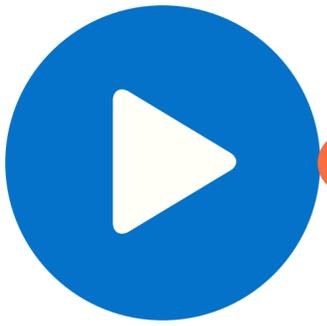


Professional Communication
Communication that is clear and professional



Cultural Competency
Interact with people of different cultures

Professional communication in the online space happens when we combine our knowledge of netiquette with cultural competency.



Professional Communication



Be Clear

- Give clear instructions that anyone can easily understand
 - Don't set students up for failure
 - Use multiple forms of representation for information
-



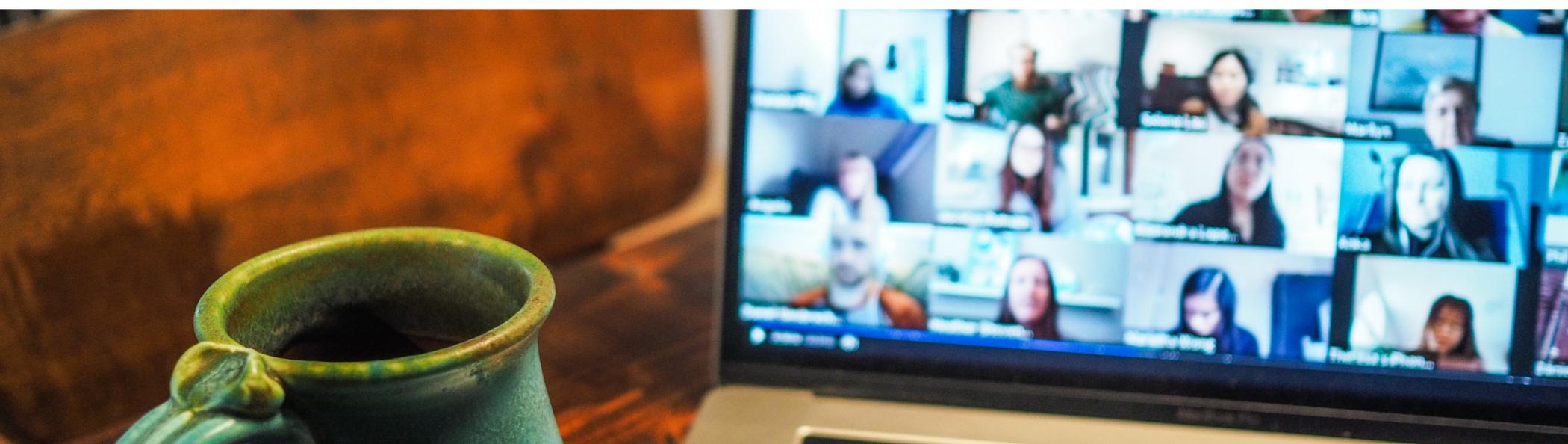
Be Human

- Be understanding and respectful
 - Give people the chance to talk in "real-time"
 - Allow everyone to contribute to their learning experience
-



Be Responsible

- Set clear expectations for communication and model them
 - Explain deadlines and meet them yourself
-





[@OT_TLC](https://twitter.com/OT_TLC)



tlc.ontariotechu.ca



[@Ontario Tech Teaching & Learning](https://www.youtube.com/@OntarioTechTeaching&Learning)



teachingandlearning@ontariotechu.ca



Teaching and Learning Centre at Ontario Tech University, 2020