CHAPTER 2: FORUM ETIQUETTE

Forum etiquette (sometimes called "Netiquette") refers to a code of conduct for use in e-mail and forum postings. If you mind your manners in the following ways, you and your peers on the forum will get along fine.

Getting Along

1. **Search the forum before starting a new topic.** Before creating a new topic, search the forum to see if a similar topic already exists. Most forums have a search function just for this purpose. You will uncover more information by reading previous posts than starting a new topic. The reason for this is simple: people don't like repeating themselves.

2. **Think before you post.** Ask yourself these questions:
   - Has my question/information already been asked/expressed?
   - Am I adding anything new/significant to the topic?
   - Is this something I want to include in a public, possibly permanent, forum?

3. **Post clearly.** Ambiguous questions can lead to no response, leaving the poster discouraged. Instead, make sure to provide as much essential information as is necessary to get your point/question across.

4. **Reread your post.** You should check your post for spelling, grammar, and tone.

5. **Check your tone of voice.** With few exceptions, forum tone should be neutral. Since computers can't portray the inflection or tone in a person's voice, how you word your post

directly affects how people will respond. Avoid using all capital letters. THIS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING.

6. **Use an informative subject heading.** The subject line of a post is what will first attract people to read it—if it's vague, confusing, inflammatory, or doesn't describe what's contained within, no one will read it or respond.

   - **Good subject**: Hi-speed: Cable vs. DSL?
   - **Good subject**: How to go wireless
   - **Bad subject**: Dataman's DSL service sux!!!
   - **Bad subject**: Want to set up wireless with laptop but can't figure out pile of cables and router all over the place

7. **Don't crosspost.** If you haven't gotten a response to your post, don't repost it across multiple forums. Instead, try to be patient.

8. **Trim signatures.** Signatures are common at the end of posts. They can include a small picture, quote, statistics, or song lyrics—ideally something that represents you in some way. A good rule of thumb is to keep your signature under four lines. Anything more will compete with the content of your post and compromise the readability of the bulletin board.

9. **Get permission.** Don't embed pictures or files in your post or signature without permission.

10. **Quote sparingly.** Quote brief excerpts from previous posts, enough to orient the reader only.

Helpful Vocabulary List of Unhelpful Behavior

If forums are new to you, you may come across what looks like another language. Most of this jargon pertains to unsavory behavior typically perpetrated by forum newcomers. Review these terms so you don't seem like a *n00b*.

- **Trolling.** Trolling is the art of posting something specifically intended to stir up trouble. The troll then sits back and watches as dozens of people jump in and start arguing.
- **Flaming.** Flaming is similar to trolling in that it is a post with negative intentions. A flame is when a poster says something negative in an attempt to get a more negative response. This behavior begets a "flame war," wherein the poster and the reader(s) argue back and forth.
- **Lurking.** Lurking means regularly reading the posts on a bulletin board, but never (or seldom) contributing anything. Lurkers don't cause trouble and are typically tolerated. In a forum where participation counts though, lurkers should make an effort to join the discussion.
- **Newbie** (also known as "n00b"). Newbies are characterized by asking the wrong questions, including ones that seem obvious (or whose answers seem easy to find). However, every member of a forum was once a newbie, so cut the n00b some slack.
- **Shotgun posting** (also known as crossposting). Shotgun posting means posting the same question on several different sites, or across multiple forums on the same site, at the same time.
- **Double posting.** Double posting means posting the same post more than once in the same thread, or in multiple threads and forums on the same site.

- **Hijacking.** Hijacking a topic occurs when a new poster changes the topic in a thread already opened by another poster seeking help. To avoid confusion and hurt feelings, start a new topic.
- **Bumping.** Bumping is posting just to keep your topic at the top of the list. Doing this can get you banned from a forum.

Acronyms and Emoticons

Internet acronyms and emoticons exist to save typing time and to express simple emotions. An Internet acronym or emoticon can let your readers know to take your post lightly. There are now acronyms and emoticons for just about every expression, but use them sparingly as many people, particularly professionals, can find them irritating or childish. Conduct an Internet search to see the possibilities. Here are a few to get you started.

Internet Acronyms

BTW	By The Way
LOL	Laughing Out Loud
TTFN	Ta-Ta For Now
IMO	In My Opinion
BRB	Be Right Back
J/K	Just Kidding
NP	No Problem

Emoticons

:)	Happy
:D	Very Happy
;]	Winking
:/	Skeptical
:(	Unhappy
:'(	Crying
:o	Surprised
:S	Confused/Frustrated