

RAMPANT RUDENESS ON THE INTERNET: WHAT WOULD "MISS MANNERS" SAY?

Give some people a computer and an Internet connection and they think it's a license for rudeness. What is it about the Internet that causes some folks to take all they learned about basic etiquette and throw it right out the window?

Think about it:

Just because your reader can't see you doesn't give you the right to be rude, but there are millions of Net users who feel that it does. I've been called names I'd rather not repeat in polite company and have been replied to in ALL CAPS. I'm not deaf.... THERE'S REALLY NO NEED TO YELL.

I attribute this newfound sense of rudeness to the feeling of invisibility one gets while sitting behind the keyboard. I mean, would you really come up to me face to face and call me a "Jackass" when you can't read simple directions on how to unsubscribe yourself from my ezine? I think not.

In this new digital age it appears we've taken everyday common courtesy and thrown it right out the window. *Whatever happened to "please" and "thank you?"* My mother, who taught me as a child to call all adults 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.' would have cardiac arrest over the emails I receive on a daily basis.

Remember the "Golden Rule?"

"Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you." Translation: before you call someone names, swear at them, report them to Spam Cop or do any other annoying gesture, stop and think. *Maybe you did subscribe to that ezine and just don't remember.* Try giving someone the benefit of the doubt before firing off an ugly email message that a real live breathing human being with feelings is going to read. **Computers may not have feelings, but people do and there's a person behind every email address and/ or website.**

Here are the 'Top 10 Do's and Don'ts' for online communication:

- 1) Don't reply to someone in all caps; it's equivalent to screaming at them.
- 2) If you receive a newsletter and can't figure out how to unsubscribe, before threatening to sue or reporting the publisher for Spam, politely ask the publisher to be removed. Any ezine publisher worth his salt will be happy to oblige. We really don't want to hold you captive.
- 3) Try to reply to all of your email messages within 48 hours. If not, many people get annoyed and will think you're avoiding them.
- 4) If you publish an ezine make sure you place subscribe and unsubscribe instructions at bottom of every issue.
- 5) Don't use foul language in an email; that will get you nowhere. If you're upset about something, please state the problem clearly along with how you'd like to see the issue can be resolved.

- 6) If you visit a website and it's not to your liking, don't fire off a nasty email stating what a loser the site owner must be. Remember what your Mom use to say "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all."
- 7) Make sure every page of your website contains an email address to contact you. Please don't make me fill out a long form just to ask you a simple question.
- 8) When replying to an email, keep the original message intact so the person you're replying to knows what you're talking about. Personally I receive over 300 messages a day, so I need to see your message in context -- otherwise, I may not understand it.
- 9) If you buy or sell products/services online, make sure you're using an online payment service like CCNOW or PayPal.com in order to move money around quickly. Don't make snail mail your only payment option.
- 10) Pay your bills in a timely fashion. If you owe someone money online don't make them send out 10 emails telling you your payment is overdue. Pay promptly.

So there you have it; my Top 10 rules for being more polite and less rude online. If you incorporate these tips into your daily Internet dealings you'll find the Net a little warmer and a friendlier place to be.

There's enough road rage in the world, so when traveling the information highway please remember that we're all human. Your computer is just a tool used to communicate with others. Please be KIND to them!

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