Student Guide to Online Communications

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Online Communications Guidelines

Introduction and Overview

Interactions in an online classroom are in written form. It is important that you are an active participant in the classroom. Your comfort level with expressing ideas and feelings in writing will add to your success in an online course. The ability to write is necessary, but it is also important to identify appropriate on-line communication. The following topics will give an overview of how students and instructors communicate within the online classroom at Kaplan University.

Netiquette

The word "netiquette" is short for "Internet etiquette." Rules of netiquette help users act responsibly when they access or trans-mit information online. As a Kaplan University student, you should be aware of the common rules of netiquette for the Web and employ a communication style that follows these guidelines.

Netiquette Continued

You should also review and refer to the Electronic Communications Policy contained in the most recent Kaplan University Catalog.

A Few "Rules of Thumb"

- Wait to respond to a message that upsets you and be careful of what you say and how you say it.
- Be considerate. Rude or threatening language, inflammatory assertions (often referred to as "flaming"), personal attacks, and other inappropriate communication will not be tolerated.
- Never post a message that is in all capital letters -- it comes across to the reader as SHOUTING!
- Use boldface and italics sparingly, as they can denote sarcasm.
- Keep messages short and to the point.
- Always practice good grammar, punctuation, and composition. This shows that you've taken the time to craft your response and that you respect your classmates' work.
- Keep in mind that threaded discussions are meant to be constructive exchanges.
- Be respectful and treat everyone as you would want to be treated yourself.
- Use spell check!

Discussions

Participating in Threaded Discussions

You will communicate with your professor and classmates using the threaded discussion areas. This is where you post your responses to Discussion Questions and share your experiences in completing exercises and applying the content of the course.

Participation in discussions is required and will help determine your grade. You are expected to contribute to each of the Discussion Questions in each unit. You should read all responses of other students and add your own.

During discussions, you must demonstrate not only that you understand the subject matter; but also that you can apply what you have learned, analyze it, integrate it with knowledge you already have, and evaluate it critically. Your postings should be appropriate and timely contributions that add value to the discussion. Your instructor will provide you with more detailed information about requirements and grading related to participation in discussions.

Discussion Guidelines

To ensure your success as a contributor to discussions and as a student in this class, we suggest the following guidelines for posting:

- Be clear about which message you are responding to. Refer to specific passages or ideas in the course or text that have sparked your interest.
- Make sure your contribution adds something new to the discussion. A simple "I agree" may be your initial response, but think about how you can take the conversation to the next level.
- Make your posting clear and easy to follow by dividing longer messages into paragraphs.
- Address classmates by name or user name, and sign your own messages.
- Feel free to pose new questions to your classmates within your own message.
- Use correct spelling, capitalization, grammar, syntax, and punctuation.
- If you plan on posting a lengthy response, it is a good idea to type your response in Word or Notepad, then copy and paste it into the discussion area. This way you'll always have a record of your communication if, for some reason, you lose your connection to the course.
- If you have any questions on these procedures, please contact Kaplan University Student Services which can be accessed by placing your mouse over the "My Studies" area of the screen on your homepage.

Examples of Discussion Responses

EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWERS

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable responses to Discussion Questions:

Example Question:
"The author claims that the Internet has changed teaching. How would you respond to this assertion?"

Unacceptable Answer:
"I agree."

Unacceptable Answer:
"I think the author is off her rocker on this point. I can't stand it when teachers try to write about education."

Acceptable Answer:
"I agree with the author's basic point--that is, I think she's right that the advent of the Internet means dramatic changes in how we teach. But I think she's so concerned with whether technology is going to replace teachers that she misses an essential point. Teachers must change themselves to use the Internet effectively. The Internet will never replace teachers and it will never be a successful tool unless teachers make it one."

Acceptable Answer:
"I disagree with the author. The Internet has not changed teaching any more than the printing press changed teaching, or modern instructional design has changed teaching. New ideas about teaching and new technologies help us deliver good teaching more effectively. They may help us understand more fully what we're delivering. They may help us reach more students. But the essence of good teaching remains the same."