

## **The Four Hallmarks of FerrisConnetiquette™**

FerrisConnetiquette™ is a list of four guidelines that apply to the way students as well as faculty interact while online in any Ferris State University class, whether that class is fully online, blended, or FerrisConnect-supported.

### **1. Show Respect**

#### **A. Show common courtesy to others when you're online.**

In general, behave as you would in a traditional classroom. The people you meet online are just as real as the people you see face-to-face in class. They are sitting at their computer, just as you are, trying to succeed in the course.

#### **B. Take turns.**

Dominating a conversation, whether face-to-face or online, is rude.

#### **C. If you lose your temper, don't act on it.**

Online communication is so fast that when they are angry, people sometimes "fire off" an email or post a comment and then later regret it. Everyone occasionally becomes angry, so you need to be especially careful not to "flame." If you do, you will almost certainly cause damage, not only to others, but to yourself as well.

### **2. Be Aware**

#### **A. Be aware that you will communicate almost exclusively in writing.**

1. Unlike in a traditional classroom, most or all communication in an online course is written, which is not as simple as face-to-face communication. Think carefully about the words you use in your written class messages, and before you post those messages, reread them for unintentional errors in tone, content, and grammar.
2. Most people know that rudeness and loss of temper are simply wrong, but they may not be aware of how much their positive body language--gestures, nods, smiles, a pleasant tone of voice--helps them show respect to others. In almost all online situations, the only language available is written. And words by themselves can all too easily convey a disrespectful, unfriendly tone--unless you take extra care that they do not.

**B. Be aware that, like words, symbols also matter.**

1. Don't use all caps because it comes across as shouting. Also, sentences that follow capitalization rules are easier to understand because they give readers information about the relative importance of certain words and about their relationships to each other.
2. Be frugal with emoticons, extra exclamation points, and extra question marks to show your meaning or emotion. Save those for when, although you've tried, you just can't find the right words to express yourself.

**C. Be aware that everything you write is stored permanently on a Ferris database.**

Everything you write in emails, discussions, chats, groups, and other places in an online class becomes a permanent record of you as a student at Ferris. Let those words reflect well upon you as a respectful, intelligent human being.

**D. Be aware of the multiple modes of communication possible in an online course.**

More than email and phone calls are available to you: you might communicate through discussion boards, wikis, chat rooms, web conferences, Skype, IM, blogs, and so on. Choose the mode that is the most appropriate for the time of day, the message, and the recipient. For instance, an email may be more appropriate than a phone call late at night, or a phone call may be the best choice for a detailed discussion.

**E. Be aware of that large files take time to download.**

Think twice before sending a large file to someone in your class who has a relatively slow internet connection.

**3. Communicate Effectively**

**A. Effective written communication is efficient.**

1. If you don't reread an online message for content and then hastily post it, you may very well leave things out that your reader needs to know. This will result in further communication, which wastes time and energy. Also, if a message contains grammar, punctuation, and other writing errors, the reader may not even understand your meaning. Therefore, efficient communication takes the writer extra time to produce...because it's the reader's time and understanding that are important.

### **3. Effective communication is clear.**

1. Above all, course expectations should be clear. Instructors should communicate course expectations in the syllabus and elsewhere to the students, and if anything is not understood, students should request clarification. Clarification might be needed on such issues as the instructor's approximate response time to a student contact, on the time by which students are expected to respond to an instructor contact, on the instructor's grading time for assignments, and on the lead time instructors give students before assignments are due.
2. Then both parties should maintain a courteous, open dialog about their expectations of each other throughout the semester.

### **4. Cultivate Community**

#### **A. Help create a community of scholars.**

In such a community, members cultivate cooperation, not competition. Get to know each other during the introductions, class discussions, and group work, and in any other opportunities that present themselves. Encourage a cooperative win-win attitude in which all members of the community are willing to work together, each contributing in his/her own way.

#### **B. Don't let members of the community down.**

Others count on you to do your part. In a face-to-face class, discussions continue as long as a few people participate. But in an online class, discussions can't proceed until you reply to the latest discussion post. Also, group work can't proceed until you contribute your latest part of the assignment or add your writing to your group's wiki. And remember: if you can no longer participate in your group, let your group know ASAP.

#### **C. Be helpful.**

An online class is a learning community in which members help each other to learn. You will almost certainly work in teams and you will certainly be involved in discussions. Everyone in an online discussion will be able to contribute, which is not always the case in face-to-face classes. Therefore, everyone in an online class has an equal voice: use your voice to encourage others in the class.