

What's your virtual etiquette?

If you don't want your mom or your boss to see it, don't post it.

Facebook, MySpace, and a host of other virtual network communities are changing the fabric of Internet communication. Below is a top-ten list of comments from students who use Facebook religiously. The comments reflect on how they view some students' profiles and their online behavior. The students represent a cross section from the universities across the nation.

1. Do not put up pictures of yourself shirtless, in your fruit of the looms, in your tiniest bikini, sexy lingerie, or buck naked and mooning the camera. Is this the way you really want to present yourself to others? Your online photo makes an important statement about you. The old adage of "a picture is worth a thousand words" holds a lot of truth in the way you present yourself to the public.
2. Do not put up pictures of yourself drinking, doing drugs, or doing something illegal. The same goes for bragging online about your drinking, bingeing, or smoking habits, or how many times you've hooked up. People develop opinions of the type of person you really are. Think carefully about how people might perceive you. What type of reputation do you want to build for yourself? How will this affect you if you are trying to get a really great job or internship? Law enforcement agencies can also use this information when investigating a potential crime.
3. Don't forget to insert a picture of yourself. The same goes if you put up a picture of your favorite actor/actress, or world federation wrestling star as your main profile picture. Others really do want to know what you look like. Put your best self forward. If you don't own a digital camera, ask a friend who owns one to take a picture of you, or scan in one of your favorites.
4. Do not try to "friend" the entire campus. Yeah, it may be cool to have 2,516 friends on your wall, but do you really know who they are? Be choosy in who you add to your wall.
5. Don't contact someone unless you are serious about getting to know them.
6. Be careful what you say. What you say in the cyber world stays in the cyber world for all to see. It can also end up in print. The Internet is a public domain, nothing is truly private.
7. Do not dedicate your Facebook to your boyfriend/girlfriend. No one wants to hear sappy confessions of undying love for someone you've only dated a few weeks. Furthermore, what happens if and when the relationship is over?

8. Don't overdose on the quotes section. It's corny and most often people don't care which quotes you like the best. Only put up a few that have significant meaning for you.
9. Never include "Whatever I can get" in your dating status. That makes you look desperate, and the least thing you want to look is desperate.
10. Just because you deleted the nasty pictures or your boastful drinking conquests from your profile doesn't mean that they are gone from the prying eyes of the Internet. The Internet is notorious for caching; that is, even if you delete information, it can still be found because it has been saved or stored online someplace, and when someone "Googles" your name, it shows up like the green fuzz on moldy bread.

Minot State University statement on the use of virtual social networks

Minot State University acknowledges that social networking Web sites (i.e., Bebo, Facebook, Friendster, LiveJournal, MySpace, Xanga, XuQa) and blogs can provide a positive outlet to develop connections with others and maintain contact with friends or colleagues from a distance. When used correctly and with caution, they can be wonderful tools. If used carelessly, they can result in negative consequences or even make individuals target(s) for people who prey on the unsuspecting.

Members of the University community (students, faculty, and staff) are urged to use discretion and caution when creating and updating their profile information. Remember that what is posted online is accessible to anyone, literally around the world, including employers, university officials, and law enforcement agencies. Think carefully about posting personal information such as address, birth date, class schedule, or work hours, and pictures that create a negative image of you. Monitor your information closely and frequently to ensure the things posted by you, or by others about you, are contributing to your personal and professional success.