Online Netiquette

For people participating in discussion groups through the Internet for the first time, there are some general guidelines.

General politeness
The computer-based discussion is similar to a normal face-to-face discussion in that it is a personal exchange of information. Therefore, it is important to observe the everyday courtesies you would employ in normal conversation. You should:

• Be polite and avoid the use of bad language
• Respect others’ points of view
• Be aware of cultural differences
• Be careful with humour and sarcasm

Characteristics of online discussions
In an online rather than a face-to-face discussion, you will notice some differences in the interactions, and in the way you contribute to the discussion. The discussion is usually conducted over an extended time frame that may be one or two days, a week or a semester. This allows you to either respond immediately to discussion points or to take some extra time to give a more considered response.

Ideas and impressions are transmitted by text so you will not have the advantage of body language to help you interpret meaning. Be careful to clearly convey your message and be aware that views may change over the period of the discussion. Try not to be judgmental, and give people the benefit of the doubt.

Hints for new users

• Make a regular commitment to log-on and check the Discussion board so you can remain in touch with the group.
• Only use capitals for specific purposes, eg headings, otherwise it can seem like you are SHOUTING.
• Read all the contributions before you reply. It can be annoying if the same ideas are repeated, once the discussion has moved on to other topics.
• Re-read your message before you send it. If you inadvertently send the wrong message, you will need to contact the system administrator to have it erased.
• As a general rule, try to keep your messages reasonably short.
• When contributing to the discussion try to move the conversation forward rather than making statements that could kill the conversation.
• The rules of copyright and plagiarism apply to electronic discussion groups just as they do elsewhere. If you use someone else's ideas, cite them appropriately.

Acknowledgement
For information on Email Netiquette we recommend the following site:
Adapted from Centre for Flexible Learning Macquarie University
http://www.cfl.mq.edu.au