General Guidelines for Behaviour in Chat Rooms and Discussions Forums

You are expected to follow netiquette. Netiquette refers to “Network Etiquette”. It is a professional way to behave when sending emails, posting to threaded discussions, or chatting online.

Here are some basic rules to help you get the most out of your online learning:

- Focus on the topic at hand. Unless your professor indicates otherwise, negative comments about grammar and spelling do not contribute to healthy and productive discussions. (Unless you are taking grammar class)

- Be careful to use neutral language. Terse or angry responses are called "flames" and are considered poor protocol. Some web administrators will remove you from the system for flaming.

- Keep the academic discussion impersonal. Challenge yourself to evaluate the message, not the messenger.

- Communicate using precise terminology and direct references.

- Do not use obscene language or references. (Remember that you are on an academic campus using state-assisted resources.)

- Try to be logical and methodical in your response. People will be able to respond and the discussion will be clear.

- Using all CAPITAL LETTERS is considered yelling, and is extremely rude.

- Keep messages concise and topical.

- Remember that you only have text to communicate. As such, be very careful about your online conversations. Try not to read anything into what someone posts. Just read what is there in the text. Also, plain text may not express the tone of the comment, which is why we use abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons (symbols that indicate various facial expressions) to clarify HOW we say things.

- Finally and most importantly, remember that you are talking to a person, so be considerate. If you are speaking to a specific person, address them by name as you would in any conversation. Also, before you say something, ask yourself, "Would I say this to this person if we were face-to-face?"
you wouldn't, don't say it. Watch your “tone” - it’s written, not verbal communication. It can be very easy to misinterpret someone’s meaning online.