

Learning a Whole World Culture

Over the past few years our missions family has been flooded with communications from a whole world culture—the use of e-mail and the Internet. Culture is the way we do things around here. Surprisingly, e-mail culture has a set of guidelines or “netiquette” that makes life easier for all “netizens.” These are the “nethics” of the net.

Have you noticed that e-mail has even developed its own language? Let’s test your e-mail linguistics skills.

TNSTAAFL ROTFL TTFN IMHO
:@ ;/ ;)
(Taken from Great Works Internet Netletter)

Netizens, here are some nethics and netiquette for a whole world culture.

1. **Give the meat of the message in the subject line.** It’s the headline of your e-mail, and let’s us know (in brief) the subject of the e-mail. It also makes it easier for electronic filing and search features.
2. **Keep e-mails brief, concise, and to the point.** Studies show that people have an easier time reading a message off the screen if bullet points are used. (Communication Solutions, Sample 3, page 3). Reread your e-mails checking for clarity. **Shorter paragraphs have more impact** than longer ones. Most people can grasp about seven ideas at once.
3. **Use fonts that are easily read.** Avoid the “stand-out-in-crowd” fonts. **Use white space and format your messages for easy reading.** Use sub-headings, etc. (A Guide to Electronic Communication, pg. 5-6)
4. **Avoid using ALL CAPS.** Typing in capitals is the written equivalent of shouting at a person. Besides, cross-cultural studies show that it is harder to READ AN ALL CAPS DOCUMENT.
5. The CC and BCC functions are cool. Well, sometimes. **Copy only those that need to receive your e-mail.** CC is almost like saying, “For your information.” If you expect to receive a response from someone you’ve copied an e-mail to make that clear.
6. **Shun two or three word responses to an e-mail.** Make your response clear enough that the recipient will understand what you are referring to without digging up the original e-mail.

Here are the answers to our quiz: TNSTAAF (There’s no such thing as a free lunch.); ROTFL (Rolling on the floor laughing.) TTFN (Ta ta for now.) IMHO (In my humble opinion) :@ (Scream) ;/ (Perplexed) ;) (Wink).

TTFN! I will be back with a half-dozen more tips for all netizens next month.