



SLetiquette

or: “How to Be a Sensible and Polite
Resident of the Metaverse”



SLetiquette

- “Your World. Your Imagination.”
- We’re all humans!
- Origins of online etiquette
- The Golden Rule
- Be online what you are offline
- Learn the community rules for where you are
- Respect people’s time
- You’re *not* in the centre of SL!
- Anonymous is fine, but...
- Look good online!
- Build a reputation!
- Share knowledge!
- Don’t abuse power!
- Be forgiving!
- Specific to SL: Chat, Instant Messaging, “Spam”, and building



“Your World. Your Imagination.”

- Remember that this phrase from Linden Lab is set in the *plural*! It’s not *your personal world*, but *our collective world*.
- Just because Linden Lab’s marketing says “you can do whatever you wish”, this does *not* mean that you are allowed to annoy others!
- All societies and communities need rules for social interaction. That’s *etiquette*.



We're all humans!

- Just because we have a computer in front of us, this does not mean we have to abolish *common sense* and *politeness*
- Be as anonymous as you want to be — but remember that the pretty graphics you see on the screen are as human as you are, and they should behave like humans behave
- Thus, *behaviour rules* apply to all of us. They have not been “abolished” just because this world is “virtual”



Origins of online etiquette

- Etiquette on virtual worlds is not a new concept
- For over two decades, we have had common rules of behaviour for online communities:
netiquette
- In fact, they are even *an Internet standard*: RFC 1855! (<http://www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html>)
- Almost all are based on common sense, adapted to the differences of online communications
- They are not “new rules”: someone who is polite in RL will also be polite online



The Golden Rule

- **Would you say it to the person's face?**
- In other words: remember the human behind the avatar
- Also remember that online communications are *written* and people keep *logs* of conversation!



Be online what you are offline

- Just because cyberspace is “different” it doesn’t mean you should behave differently!
- People on the phone also have learned to behave like they do when talking face-to-face
- Be ethical — ethics apply to every community, not only RL society
- Breaking the law is always bad etiquette; don’t get encouraged by a false sense of “anonymosity” (people are logging you!)



Learn the community rules for where you are

- Not all SL communities have the same rules (PG vs. Mature, for example)
- Learn/listen first, talk later
- Respect others' community rules (e.g. Goreans, Elves, Furies have the same “right” to their community rules as you have on your own)
- If you dislike other people's rules, go elsewhere — SL is big enough



Respect people's time

- “Being online” gives us a false idea that it means “being available all the time” — that’s a common misconception!
- When people are doing things of their own, interrupting them with IMs (even friendly ones) or dropping on their heads with p2p teleport just because they “are there” is not acceptable — their time is precious, as is yours



You're *not* in the centre of SL!

- Every one of us has our own priorities
- Never assume that others' priorities are the same as yours — they *aren't*!
- Just because you're bored, that doesn't entitle you to demand others to entertain you
- Everyone is entitled to privacy and free time on their own — ask first before invading others' privacy
- Don't assume others are around just to talk with you. Strangers might simply not care about your views.



Anonymous is fine, but...

- Don't badger other users for personal information such as sex, age, or location. After you have built an acquaintance with another user, these questions may be more appropriate, but many people hesitate to give this information to people with whom they are not familiar.
- If a user is using a nickname alias or pseudonym, respect that user's desire for anonymity. Even if you and that person are close friends, it is more courteous to use his nickname. Do not use that person's real name online without permission.
- If you can't trust people enough because they're anonymous, online communities are not for you.
- This is so important that it's part of the SL ToS!



Look good online!

You'll be judged by:

- How you act/behave
- How well you type and what kinds of things you say (think twice about profanity!)
- How you look/present yourself
- If you're polite to others and respect them

However, you'll *never* be judged by:

- How you look iRL, or what your sex/skin colour/age/religion/country/language is — that's the beauty of being online: no discrimination!



Build a reputation!

- Just because the rating system in SL is not being used much, it doesn't mean that you're not *constantly* building up your reputation!
- You're only judged by your acts — so think twice on what image you're presenting to your fellow residents (if you don't care about their opinion, they won't care about yours, either!)
- Remember, good opinions about yourself will take some time to propagate; bad opinions will spread like a forest fire. It's *very hard* to erase a bad opinion once it spread, and you might never “shake off” that bad impression.



Share knowledge!

- Think positively: what would you like people to tell you most?
- Very likely, something that you didn't know before: a lovely place to visit, a tip or trick they've found, a shop that sells things that you like, someone they met
- Share that, and people will respect you and enjoy your tips and advices. You'll be considered a generous person.



Don't abuse power!

- If you know more than others, don't abuse that power!
- Knowing more than others or having more power than others does not entitle you to take advantage of them.
- Remember that the newbie today is the land baron of tomorrow. Your roles may be quickly reversed, and you want to keep them as friends.



Be forgiving!

- We all make mistakes
- We were all newbies once
- We all have faced new situations we haven't understood, rules that we have broken before knowing them
- We all have offended others without meaning/intention just because we didn't know better!

So... be forgiving with others with their 'mistakes', because you have made them as well!



Specific to SL!

- Never enter people's homes without their permission
- Never p2p teleport to where others are (even your friends): get permission first. Stalking is a ToS violation
- When people are busy, they mean it; they're not offending you by not answering!
- Disturbing other people's events is not a breach of SLetiquette; it's also a ToS violation!



Chat

- You just need to say 'hello' once when entering a place (additionally saying 'hi' to people you know is polite, and acknowledges them publicly as your friends)
- Use people's names when in a very chatty zone; it grabs their attention more easily
- Chat with noisy sounds is fun once; it's violating others' privacy if used twice.



Instant Messaging

- Since we have no way to know if the person on the other side is still writing, don't automatically assume they're not caring for you (they might just have picked the RL phone, for instance)
- Don't start conversations with 'lol' or a smiley and then wait for others to chat with you. Talk with them only if you have things to say. Even a simple 'Hello, how are you feeling today?' is much friendlier than just a ':-P' to attract attention!



IMs (part 2)

- While you can IM around the grid, you can only be physically in one place. Remember that when offering teleports to others: there is a reason why the other person is not with you physically!
- On group IMs (massive spam!): if someone asks a question and you don't know the answer, *don't say so*. It's not unpolite to keep the group IM channel free of chat — use it for supplying knowledge and information, not for keeping your friends informed that you're alive (they already know you are!)



“Spam”

- Don't drop objects on other people, be it items, clothes, notecards, landmarks, or group invites
- Ask first if they wish to receive anything!
- The same applies to scripted objects
- Spam is also a ToS violation



“My house is what
I wish it to be!”

- Respect your neighbours — they’re also entitled to have the houses *they* want (or: *your house is not at the centre of the Universe, either*)
- Think collaboration and cooperation: if you and your neighbour work together, you can accomplish more than by being at odds with each other



Thanks for your time :-)

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