

How Do You Communicate Properly? The 25 *Golden Rules* of Messenger Netiquette

Message Design

1. Keep Messages Short and to the Point

- **Concise sentences** are the be-all and end-all of messenger netiquette when messaging. If the information cannot be conveyed in a few sentences, **a voice message or video call is recommended**. If there is a lot of information, you should consider using **alternative media**. Sending extensive information in a text message is not only annoying for the recipient but also defeats the purpose of concise transmission.

2. Reply in Full

- Some people have a habit of sending every word or half-sentence of a text message individually. For the recipient, this means a lot of consecutive beeps, which can rightly be annoying. It is better to **send entire sentences** and structure information **using paragraphs**.

3. Stay Professional

- Since Messenger is used for professional communication here, it should be remembered that every text sent **reflects one's own professionalism**. When making initial contact, it is therefore also advisable to briefly introduce yourself in one sentence. **Capital letters or bold text are generally out of place**. Exaggerated punctuation such as “???” and “!!!” should also be avoided. This is because it would imply that a message is being shouted or given undue importance.

4. Use Emojis

- Emoticons and emojis have become established in messengers and everyone knows and uses them. Emoticons also have their place in the professional use of a messenger and **can support communication and collaboration**. In some cases, emoticons can also lighten up communication and **contribute to a positive mood**. However, messenger netiquette recommends using emoticons in moderation and as a supplement to text. This is because everyone interprets emoticons differently and does not necessarily know all the emoticons, so this can also lead to confusion.

5. Pay Attention to the Way You Express Yourself

- A text message can only be read and cannot be supported by gestures or facial expressions. The **more precise** the expression, the clearer the communication. For example, **sarcasm or harsh words are usually not recommended** as they can be misunderstood and lead to misinterpretation. It is therefore advisable to use neutral wording and good expression.

6. Be Sure to Proofread

- Text messages may be a quick way to reply, but they should always be **checked for grammar and spelling**. It is also important to regularly check the **autocorrect**. If you are unsure about this, you can use some of the free add-ons and tools available, such as:
 - LanguageTool
 - scribbr
 - Quillbot
 - Rechtschreibprüfung24
 - Mentor.Duden.de
 - Experte.de

7. End the Dialog Clearly and Politely

- Once the topic of discussion has been resolved, it is advisable to end the conversation with a thank you or a promise to report back soon.

8. Use Clear Subject Lines

- For messengers with email functionality, use **clear and precise subject lines** to inform the recipient about the content of the message in advance. This saves time and ensures better organization.

Timing and Speed

9. Respond Promptly

- Often, there are unconscious “rankings” in our heads about how quickly colleagues respond to a particular communication channel. If you receive a message in Messenger, you should reply promptly. This is because the chosen communication channel implies that the sender wants a quick response and direct exchange. If a prompt response was not possible, you should perhaps briefly apologize for this in your reply.

10. Write at Reasonable Times

- Despite flexible working hours, messenger netiquette recommends sending text messages **during official working hours**. This is because for some people, receiving messages late at night or very early in the morning can be a real turn-off. Sometimes, hints about priority, such as “not urgent but important,” can help to avoid unnecessary pressure.

11. Be Patient

- There may always be situations in which the other person cannot respond immediately—even though the message has already been received and read. Following up is of course allowed, but you should wait two to three hours depending on the urgency.

12. Notifications and Quiet Times

- **Respect your colleagues' quiet times**, especially if they work in different time zones. Use **notification settings** to avoid being disturbed when you need to focus on a task.

Use of Group Chats and Additional Tools

13. Use Group Chats Sensibly

- Group chats act as a **central communication environment** so that employees can exchange information directly and from any location. Sometimes the entire department or all members of a team are included in the chats. As a general rule, you should ask yourself whether messages are relevant for **all participants in a group** chat or whether they would be better communicated in a smaller group. It can also be important to separate work and leisure-oriented communication. Chain messages, event votes, silly videos, etc. should be shared in a separate group chat.

14. Use of File Attachments and Links

- Attachments and links should always be described and clearly labeled so that the recipient knows what they are. Avoid simply sending large files without warning.

15. Contributing to the Community

- In group chats, all members should be activated by asking questions and creating an open atmosphere for the exchange of ideas. Passive users could be encouraged to participate actively.

Security and Confidentiality

16. Maintain Confidentiality

- Make sure to share confidential information only with the right people and use **secure communication channels**. Sensitive data should never be shared in public or large group chats.

17. Mark Priority and Urgency

- To help recipients better understand the importance of the message, it can be helpful to clearly **mark the priority and urgency**. Use terms such as “urgent,” “high priority,” or “can wait.”

18. Choose an Appropriate Profile Picture

- The profile picture should match the organization and personality. A serious photo or—quite simply—the employee’s initials are a good choice here. However, depending on the corporate culture, profile pictures such as those used in social networks (Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, etc.) can also be suitable.

19. Keep Software and Apps Up to Date

- Make sure you are using the latest versions of Messenger software to avoid security vulnerabilities and to take advantage of new features.

20. Use Privacy Settings

- Make optimal use of Messenger's **privacy settings**. Make sure that personal data is only accessible to those who really need it.

21. Be Aware of Phishing and Fraud Attempts

- Be vigilant about suspicious messages and links. **Never disclose personal or sensitive information** upon request without verification.

Respectful Interaction and Feedback

22. Respectful Tone

- Even when discussions and disagreements arise, the tone should always **remain respectful and courteous**. Especially in written exchanges, emotions can easily be misunderstood.

23. Avoid Multitasking

- Multitasking during a messenger communication can lead to **misunderstandings** and missed details. If possible, focus entirely on the conversation.

24. Regular Feedback Rounds

- Organize regular **feedback rounds** within the team to evaluate messenger communication and discuss suggestions for improvement.

Tips and Checklists

25. Communication Checklist

- Create a **checklist** with the most important points to check before sending a message (e.g. spelling, clarity, target audience).

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