

Dear Fellow E-Mail User,

Thank you for thinking of others when you send and receive e-mail.

E-mail is, hands-down, the greatest communications tool since the telephone. But its power makes it easy to abuse. You may already be abusing it, and not know it. Here are a few tips that, when followed, can make everybody's e-mailing experience more pleasant:

- **Please ask before you start forwarding me things.** It seems silly, but this common courtesy goes a long way to reducing the amount of junk mail you and I must deal with every day.
- **I don't need some anonymously written poem or heart-wrenching story to remind me how important friends are.** I know you are my friend. If you want to show me you care, send me a sincere personal note to let me know how you are doing, or a picture of the kids, the pet, etc. I'd rather get that than an anonymous poem any day.
- **Please don't send me a message that instructs, begs or demands that I forward it on.** You may not mean it that way, but these mandates imply that you do not trust me to decide for myself what is worthy of forwarding and what is not. I prefer to decide on my own.
- **I rely exclusively on valid sources, such as well-established web sites and the media, to keep me informed of things that may harm me or my family.** Despite the fact that you can quickly and easily reach several people, there are no controls on e-mail to make it valid and reliable, thus I automatically discount any "news" that comes via e-mail. If the information you are sharing does not contain reliable sources that can be easily verified, please don't share it with me.
- **Copy and paste the text you want to forward into a new message.** Just hitting "forward" often adds indents or annoying ">>" characters to let me know what's old text and what's new. The resulting message is confusing and difficult to read. If the message already has them in it, please take them out before you send it to me. If its not worth the effort, maybe you shouldn't be forwarding it.
- **You don't have to forward a message exactly as you received it.** If it contains some stuff you like and other stuff you don't, delete the parts you don't like and forward only the parts you really want to share. This way, I don't have to wade through a bunch of junk to find what you really want to share with me.
- **Please delete any old e-mail addresses that were in the message when you got it.** Forwarding a message leaves the headers in place, revealing the e-mail addresses of everyone who has received and/or sent the message in the past. I don't really want to know who got it before I did and I don't want my e-mail address distributed in this manner. I'm sure you don't, either.
- **Use the Blind Copy (BC:) feature of your e-mail,** instead of the To: or CC: fields to send a message to multiple recipients. BC: prevents me from seeing the addresses of other people to whom you've sent the same message. This keeps all of us safe and helps us control who has our address.
- **Don't send a questionable message "just in case."** You have one of the most powerful research tools in the world literally at your fingertips. It only takes a minute to check a letter out and you don't need to be an academician or researcher to do it. Three excellent sites for research are BreakTheChain.org (www.breakthechain.org), the Urban Legends Reference Pages (Snopes.com) and TruthOrFiction.com www.truthorfiction.com.

- **Please don't send me warnings about computer viruses.** I installed anti-virus software on my computer and keep it updated regularly. It was well worth the small investment for the peace of mind I now have. Most virus warnings circulating via e-mail are hoaxes designed to poke fun at people who don't know better. By keeping my software updated, I *always* know better.
- **Please don't bother me about a sick, dying or missing child.** I don't want to seem heartless, but most of these e-mails are hoaxes, outdated, or contain too little information to be of any value. We all want to help a child in need, but putting a child into a chain e-mail can easily turn him or her into an Urban Legend, a fate I wouldn't wish on anyone.
- **I will not sign any petition that comes to me via e-mail,** nor will I pass it on - no matter how noble the cause. E-petitions are often near-sighted, half-hearted efforts that do not consider the long-term drawbacks of e-mail as a tool for activism. They have no validity and little or no political influence. In addition, many unscrupulous folks "farm" e-petitions and other chain letters for e-mail addresses for their own gain.
- **Don't feel compelled to share with me every joke you receive.** There are many "joke-a-day" lists to which I can subscribe and get the same jokes. Also, I've been on the 'net long enough to have seen the same jokes numerous times. Unless it is absolutely, positively, hands-down, without-a-doubt the funniest, rip-roaringest, knee-slappingest joke you've ever seen, please don't forward it to me.
- **Please ignore messages that tell you to forward them on to X number of people to get a prize or earn cash.** Businesses do not use e-mail to give away money or products. It won't happen and it's embarrassing when I see my friends falling for it.
- **Please don't forward any e-mail I send you without my permission.** I shared with you because I trust you. I don't want my opinions sent to anyone I do not personally choose, nor do I want to risk being mistakenly attributed with something I've sent you. Please don't put me at risk.

I appreciate that you count me among your friends and regular contacts. The tips above are intended to make us all better users of e-mail so our communication stays pleasant and enjoyable. Thank you for letting me get that off my chest. I look forward to corresponding with you.

Sincerely,
A fellow e-mail user