

CHAT ETIQUETTE CHEAT SHEET

How to make instant messaging work to your advantage?

Do

Read before replying.

Due to the dynamic nature of instant messaging, we might be fast on hitting the reply button. Instead of replying hastily, make sure to re-read the message, to provide the most accurate answer.

Discuss one thing at a time.

Since everything happens in real time, it might happen that you and the person you're talking with open several subjects in a short amount of time. To make instant messaging as effective as possible, try to discuss one thing at a time, and wait before you write a response to ensure a good communication flow.

Make yourself unavailable.

Instant messaging at work can be a distraction sometimes. That said, make sure to use your offline status feature to let your team members know you're off limits.

Start your message with a greeting.

Common courtesy is valued in instant messaging. Start with a simple "hello" or "hi".

Be direct.

The first rule of instant messaging is to be precise. Don't write long messages. Instead, be direct, ensuring your team member will understand what you need right away.

Check availability.

Before starting with a question, make sure the person you're messaging is available.

Don't

Respond without thinking.

Instant messaging happens in real time. We might be tempted to respond quickly, however, we might fail to understand what the other person is telling/asking us.

Clump up the messages.

To avoid the confusion and miscommunication, make sure to discuss one thing at a time and avoid sending messages in excess. Wait until you're sure the other person is finished.

Stop your work to answer the message.

Since instant messaging happens in real time, some of your co-workers might expect an immediate answer. Don't put your focus at risk by replying to their messages when it's not convenient for you.

Jump straight to the thing you need.

Although you shouldn't write long messages, you should still be nice to your coworkers. Instead of demanding something from them right away, make sure to tell them hello first.

Beat around the bush.

Instant messages should be on point and short, to ensure a proper communication flow.

Expect 24/7 availability.

People won't always be available when you need them to be. Before writing anything, check with them whether they can talk with you.

When to use instant messaging and when to use other forms of communication?

Instant messaging

When you need something urgently.

When you can craft a short and concise message.

When time is a key factor. *(For instance, when you're in a meeting and you need to tell your coworker something without interrupting it.)*

When you already established a relationship with someone.

Other forms

When you need to discuss something in-detail.

When you need a longer explanation.

When you need to document something. Email is a more formal way of communication, and it's much more natural to lead a conversation that needs to stay documented there.

Where you're meeting someone for the first time.