

2-3 Rules and manners for mailing lists, web pages, and bulletin boards

When you use a mailing list or electronic bulletin board, both of which are group communication tools, it is essential that you think about other participants before doing something. When taking part in a mailing list or electronic bulletin board, keep the following in mind.

■ Things to remember

● Follow the rules.

When taking part in a mailing list or electronic bulletin board, follow the rules laid out by the administrator. In the case of a mailing list on a specific theme, for example, posting irrelevant messages repeatedly may constitute the violation of a rule.

If you do not agree with the rules of the group in which you are participating, it is better to avoid being involved in that group than expressing your opinion persistently.

● Browse the previous messages.

Before posting your message to a message accumulation system, such as an electronic bulletin board or news group, browse the previous messages. That helps you grasp the topics that have been discussed and the atmosphere of the group.

It is not the right thing to do to bring up a worn-out topic without browsing any previous message. In order to make the ongoing discussion productive, browse through the previous messages in advance to grasp what has been discussed.

- **Be responsible for what you say.**

What is special about communication via the network is that you cannot see the faces of the people you are communicating with and their responses, making you prone to make one-sided comments. Emotional remarks may offend the feelings of those involved, leading to online bickering (flaming).

While heated discussions are fine, refrain from damaging other people's personality, finding faults in other people's comments, and posting messages intended to hurt other people. Your messages will be read by all other members of the group. Be responsible for what you say.

- **Avoid using jargon.**

While this depends on who's participating, it is generally advisable to use expressions that can be understood by all members of the group. Excessive use of jargon (a set of terms understood only by people of a specific group) and unfamiliar abbreviations makes it difficult for latecomers to understand what is being said, giving them a sense of alienation. Try to make your mailing list or bulletin board an open space for discussion, not a closed community.

- **Embrace the spirit of giving back.**

In most cases, information is shared voluntarily on the Internet. Answering questions is not a job; the Internet is run in the spirit of conviviality that is a way for people to enrich their lives by sharing their knowledge. If you learn something on the Internet, give some of your knowledge in return. Having that kind of mindset helps you get accustomed to the Internet culture.

If you don't have anything to give in return at the moment, offer some words of gratitude. Make it a practice to include words of gratitude like, "Thank you for your comment," in your reply message.