Comics about netiquette
Exercises for 12-16 year olds

Appropriate and considerate behaviour is just as important online as in face-to-face conversations. However, the anonymity of the Internet can sometimes make one forget the rules for good behaviour, and therefore they should from time to time be discussed in class.

Updated netiquette, related comics and assignment have been published as a part of the Media Skills Week 2013. Each assignment deals with one specific netiquette-theme. You can use all the assignments, or choose the ones best fitted for your group!

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Netiquette part 1: Do you take others into consideration?

Bullying, discrimination and nasty comments causes grief also online. You should therefore treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

Each and every one has the right to control one's own public image. You can't share pictures or information regarding someone else without their permission, and you can't create a profile online using someone else's name.

Remember, everyone does not share your sense of humour. A picture or video posted as a joke may not be appreciated by everyone.
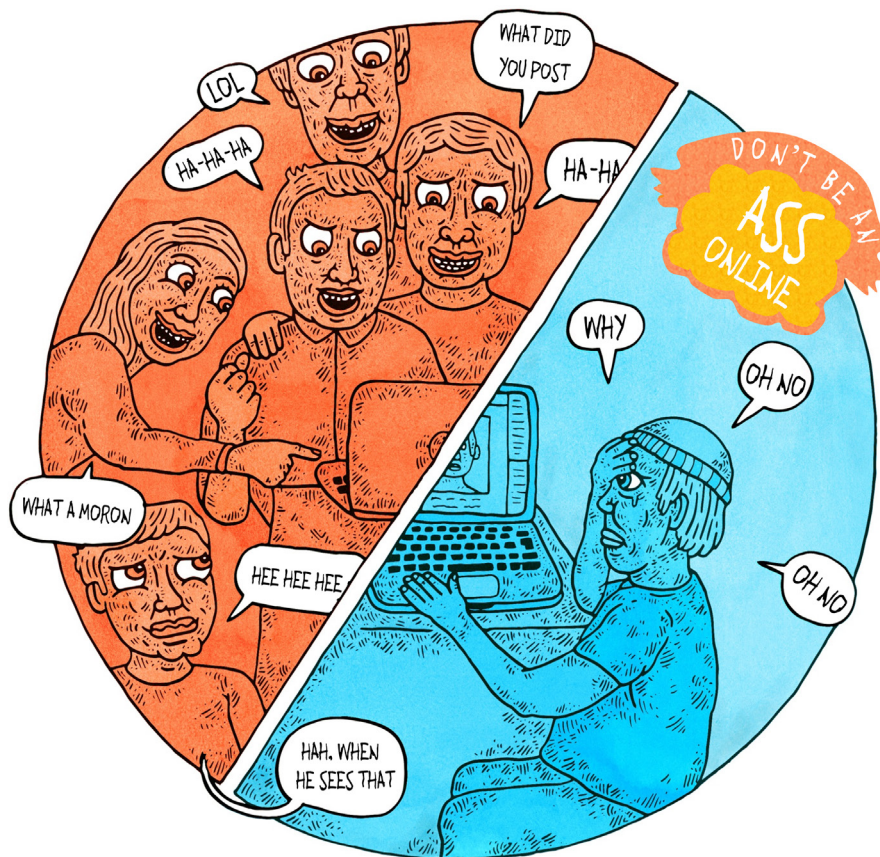
Comment by cartoonist Joonas Rinta-Kanto: 'When I was younger, the Internet was not widely available, nor in such a big role as it is today. Therefore, online bullying did not really occur. Discrimination and nasty comments online are today serious problems. You often forget what you're doing online and how that makes someone else feel. In the picture I wanted to show both sides of the computer. On one side a group of people are joking around and post a 'funny" picture of someone else. On the other side we can see how that makes the other person feel."

In the first comic about netiquette, a bullying situation is highlighted. Bullying should not be tolerated. One should always intervene. The aim of the related assignment is to develop guidelines for how to act when bullying occurs. Guidelines are developed for the average Internet user, for someone who witnesses bullying, and for someone being bullied.

1. Discussion about the comic. Together, discuss the comic and the incident.
- What happens?
- What characters are there?
- What can you see on the computer screen?
- What could the boy do?

Also discuss the specific netiquette section, and bullying occurring online. What is online bullying? What forms can it take? What is the cause of bullying?

2. Theme groups.
Divide the class into three groups. The assignment for each group is to develop guidelines for how to act when bullying occurs. The group with the first theme is to develop general guidelines for the average Internet user. The second group should focus on a person witnessing bullying online. The third group will develop instructions for someone being bullied.

Group I: Guidelines for the average Internet user. Online, everyone can take part in discussions, create content, and share pictures and information. How can you make the Internet a better place? How can each and every one help make the Internet a better place? Write down at least five pieces of advice.

Group II: Guidelines for someone witnessing bullying. Have you witnessed bullying online? Even if you had nothing to do with it, you can intervene. How should you intervene? Come up with at least five ways.

Group III: Instructions for someone being bullied. There are many forms of bullying. Ask the students to think about what kind of action someone being bullied could take. How should one act in different situations? What measures could the bullied use? Who can you contact? Write down at least five pieces of advice.

3. Developing common guidelines.
Discuss the ideas presented by the groups. What kind of thoughts do they evoke? What else could we do to tackle bullying? Compile the guidelines on a class-blog or a wall-poster. You can update the guidelines at a later stage.

Netiquette part 2: How do you protect your privacy?

Everyone has the right to privacy, and that is something you should stick to. Have you thought about: What kind of information or pictures do you share? Who do you share what with? What do Internet services know about you, and what could they use that information for? Do friends and online acquaintances need to know where you are and when? Should you accept all friend requests?

Make sure your passwords and user names are difficult to guess. Keep them safe so that no one can access your profile. In a public place, make sure no outsider can see what you're doing online.

Comment by cartoonist Tuuli Hypen: "Social media has been very useful for me. On the other hand I often worry about the fact that storing and prying for personal information has become so common. You can easily share too much about your private life. In my picture, a harmless looking identity thief is prying for information and passwords. I got the idea right away, but luckily not from a personal experience."

In the second comic about netiquette, the risks of Internet use are highlighted. An Internet user can only see a fraction of the Internet: you can't always know how personal information and pictures spread. Therefore, you should think twice about what information you post. Parents can help manage personal information - but to what degree should they interfere?

1. Discussion about the comic. Discuss the comic together.
- What happens?
- What can you see in the picture?
- Can you think of something else you can do online?
- What kinds of risks are related to Internet use?

2. Assignment. How much should parents know about their kids' Internet use?
Describe the assignment. Tell the students that you will read brief stories aloud. They should then go stand in the part of the room that represents their opinion. One end of the room is 'I agree completely", and the other end is 'I disagree completely". You can stand anywhere between these two.

Story 1: 14 year old Lasse talks to his friends on Messenger every day. His mom thinks it's occupying too much of his time. "You should be doing your homework! You guys just waffle on about some meaningless computer game". Lasse gets mad. "How do you know what we're talking about? You don't have the right to read my private conversations", he shouts. "Don't you know that according to the UN Children's Rights, children have the right to their own privacy?"

Do you agree or disagree: Parents should keep tabs on what their children do online?

Story 2: "15 year old Jesse has become acquainted with a photographer on a Chat page. Jussi is 32 years old, and claims he has taken pictures of many celebrities. He thinks Jesse's profile picture looks great, and urges Jesse to consider a career in modelling. He asks Jesse to take some more pictures of himself together with a friend. If the pictures turn out nice, he will invite Jesse to his studio. In secret, Jesse's father reads the messages, realizes what's going on, and asks Jesse to stop talking to the man."

Do you agree or disagree: Parents should keep tabs on what their children do online?

Story 3: "Jennika is friends with her dad on Facebook. Her dad notices that Jennika and some of her friends keep posting nasty comments about some status updates and pictures of a few classmates. He brings up the subject at home, contacts their teacher, and they start to sort things out."

Do you agree or disagree: Parents should be friends with their children on Facebook?

Story 4: "Jessika has been playing soccer since she was little, and her mother is the coach of the team. Lately she has lost interest in the sport, and is considering quitting playing altogether. She talks about the subject together with a few friends on Facebook. She had forgotten that her mother is also her friend on Facebook. This leads to an unpleasant conversation at dinner that Jessika was not ready for. She doesn't like that her mother had been monitoring her online."

Do you agree or disagree: Parents should be friends with their children on Facebook?

Story 5: "Leevi uses the Internet many times per day. He mostly visits Facebook and some gaming sites. However, he occasionally also visits porn sites. He originally ended up on these sites when Googling 'am I gay". One day his mother tells him he should not visit these sites, and threatens to take away his computer for a while. Leevi is embarrassed at first, but gets angry when he realizes his mother has been snooping around on his computer."

Do you agree or disagree: Parents should keep an eye on what pages their children visit?

End the lesson with a general discussion:
Where do you draw the line between protecting your child and spying?

Netiquette part 3: Estimating the reliability

Online you can get to know different people, and even find a new friend. But how do you know your acquaintance is who he/she tells you? When meeting someone in person for the first time, remember the following: let others know beforehand, bring a friend along, only meet people in public places.

The Internet is packed with content (e.g. text, pictures, videos). What is the content trying to tell you, who has created it? How do you know what's true and what's false? Think about whom you can trust online. Remember that many online marketing methods are very discreet.
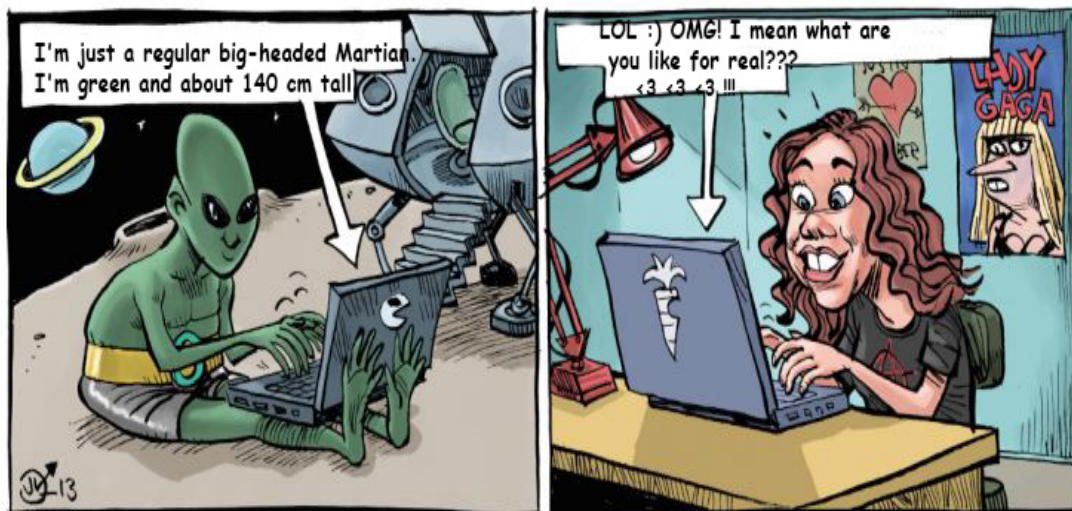
Comment by cartoonist Jarkko Vehniäinen: 'The idea for the comic came from the phrase 'How can you tell your acquaintance is who he/she tells you?" In this case the description sounds unbelievable, but it turns out to be the truth. Keep in mind that everyone is not as honest and reliable as big-headed Martians."

"Online, anyone can be anyone." You often see that warning in online discussions. This comic is about trust in online discussions. How can you know whom you're talking to?

The assignment covers different online situations in which it's important to know the other person. Focus lies on different aspects of arranging a meeting with someone you met online.

1. Discussion about the comic.
Go through the comic and the related netiquette section.
- What happens?
- What characters are there?
- What thoughts does it evoke?
- How does the story continue?

2. Meeting new people.
Online you can get to know new people, and also make some new friends. Ask the students, in what type of situations you can get to know other people online. If you want to meet someone you got to know on the Internet, how should you prepare and what should you take into consideration? What is especially important according to the students?

3. Preparing for presentations. Divide the students into suitable-sized groups.
Within the groups, the students will plan a situation that involves a message or lesson related to meeting an Internet acquaintance. The situation, that is to be presented or performed in class, does not need to be a warning example. It can also highlight some positive aspect of meeting an Internet friend. The comic can work as a source of inspiration.

4. Presentations. Present the plays in class, and analyse them together.
- What happened in the play?
- What was the message, and what thoughts did it evoke?
- Could something similar happen in real life?

Netiquette part 4: What kind of content do you create?

The Internet offers plenty of tools that enable you to share your thoughts and work with others. You own the rights to the material you create, such as texts or videos. The same rights apply to other people's work. You can't copy it without permission.

Online, it's easy to state your opinion, and freedom of speech is something you should make use of. However, you should remember not to insult anyone. Do you know how laws regulate behaviour on the Internet?

Target group: Grades 7-9
Objective: Learn more about publishing material online, e.g. copyright laws
Duration: 45 minutes
Material: Paper, drawing utensils, (Internet access)

This netiquette section highlights some issues related to creating content. How can the Internet be used as a tool for creativity? Creating content and publishing it online are not quite as simple matters as one might think.

We all own the rights to the content we create, e.g. texts or videos. The same rights apply to other people's work. You can't copy it without permission.
The aim of the assignment is to inspire the students to be creative.

1. Read the netiquette section aloud.

2. Ask the students to form pairs and to draw a comic strip based on the netiquette section.

3. Once they have completed the task, have a class discussion about what needs to be taken into consideration if these comics were to be published online. Do you need someone's permission?

4. If the students want to, you can publish to comics online and follow how they spread through social media.

Netiquette part 5: Discuss the Internet!

What about the Internet is important to you? When you talk to others about content on the Internet, you learn more about the opportunities it offers. Others can give you hints on good pages and applications, and you can also share your own experiences.

Sometimes online material can be shocking or cause anxiety. Don't make others suffer - the correct way to act is to report any inappropriate content to the administrator. If any online content occupies your mind, you should talk about it with a reliable person.

Comment by cartoonist Anni Nykänen: 'I'm a very curious person by nature, and when I was younger I used to click all kinds of links on the Internet. There were a few rather unpleasant surprises, but nowadays I know whether to click or not. I was inspired by a personal experience. Someone had posted an indecent link on a forum. Oh well, the user was not active for very long, because the administrators used their authority and removed the prankster."

The fifth comic about netiquette shows a situation in which badly timed pop-up windows cause an embarrassing misunderstanding. Pop-ups are advertisement windows used in Internet marketing. What is special about the ads in the comic? Why?

1. Discussion about the comic. Discuss the comic together.

- What happens, and who are the characters?
- What causes the misunderstanding?
- Why does the mother get mad?
- In what other way could she have reacted?
- Why is Timmy embarrassed by the pop-up ads?

Ask the students about their own Internet rules. How often do they discuss Internet use together with their parents? What kind of rules do they have at home regarding Internet use?

2. Writing a discussion.
The students are to work in pairs. Ask them to write a continuation of the comic. How do things develop?

3. Presenting the discussions.
The discussions are to be read aloud. Each pair reads a discussion written by another pair. Collect the discussions and shuffle (so they are not in order). Hand the first discussion to the first pair, and ask them to read it. Go through all the discussions.

Are the discussions realistic? Could this happen in a real situation? There is a lot of different material online, and sometimes you can come across it by accident. If you come across something unpleasant online, you should talk to someone about it. You should keep you parents up to date with what you're doing online; because then it's easier to talk to them about something unpleasant you've come across.

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