

Instant Message (IM) Etiquette

Instant Message (IM) is an easy alternative to a phone call and often quicker than email. Its very nature is conversational and similar to face-to-face discussions. There are a few general etiquette rules you should keep in mind when communicating via IM.

Before sending an IM, check the person's status. This will help you decide if and when it's appropriate to connect:

- Available:** initiate a conversation, your contact is willing and available.
- Busy:** refrain from sending a message unless it's urgent.
- In a Call:** your contact may not respond immediately or may not respond at all. This will vary by person and by the nature of the call.
- Do Not Disturb:** messages cannot be received and are blocked by the system.

When initiating an IM, it's a good practice to ask if the other person has time to chat with you (e.g., "Got a moment to discuss the class schedule?"). This isn't always necessary with someone you know well.

Sometimes a person might not respond immediately. Avoid sending multiple messages and wait for a response to your initial IM unless it is urgent.

If you receive a terse response (e.g., "in a meeting - talk later"), don't be offended. They're just letting you know they are unavailable.

Always consider the tone and content of your message.

Don't invite someone to join a multi-party IM session in progress without first asking everyone in the session if it's okay.

Ask before elevating an IM conversation to a call, video chat, or conference. They may only have time for a quick note and not for a full conversation.

Avoid having too many "goodbyes" as you and your colleague attempt to end the conversation.