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Netiquette

Thanks to Josh Ard for providing this text.

What follows is some general advice about how to use the groups.michbar.org mailing list system. The basic idea is to be polite and cause no harm. If serious violations of proper conduct occur, the section council reserves its right to restrict usage of the list by violators.

Always use a meaningful subject line. There are hundreds of list members with diverse interests the legal subject area. It is a great time-saver to know what a message is about without having to open it. If the subject is not considered relevant, a participant can delete it without reading.

If you change the topic, change the subject line. Sometimes a member posts a question, but one of the responses picks up a slightly different issue. If the issue is different, please change the topic. This helps people immediately. It also helps with the archives. Readers may well remember the discussions over the past week, but memories will get very murky as months go by. Appropriate subject lines make it much easier to use the archives.

Decide whether a response makes more sense to be sent just to the sender, or to the entire list. Often the questions posted on the list are of general interest and many readers want to know the answer. Other responses are really only for the eyes of the sender. These include messages such as "me, too" and "thank you." Sometimes, it makes sense to respond to the list saying, essentially, "Hey, I'd like to know the answer myself. Please respond to the list." The default reply is to the sender alone. To reply to the list, either choose "reply to all" in your email program or reply to LISTNAME@groups.michbar.org In general, think before you send. Often, one realizes the mistake an ohnosecond too late.

Do not use the list to send personal messages. For example, if Ms. X posts a message and you need to remind her about your golf match next week, do not send a message to the entire list to remind her of the engagement.

Do not use the list for advertising or marketing. There are enough of those in this world. Participants should be safe from marketing while reading the list. The list will be use to announce certain events sponsored by the section council and occasionally events sponsored by a sister section will be announced, but any deviations from this must be approved by the section council. This does not mean that a person cannot answer a call for a referral, but such responses are better made off-list.

KISS. Keep it simple, please. Generally, the easiest text to read is black print on a solid white background. It may seem cute to use colored print or, even worse, a colored background or a background with some really cutesy design on it (wallpaper). Text such as that can be very difficult to read. As readers age, these contrast issues are especially important for legibility. What is the point of sending something that is difficult to read!



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Do not shout. Do not use all capitals. NO MATTER WHAT YOU MAY BELIEVE, RESEARCH INDICATES THAT TEXT IN ALL CAPITALS IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO READ THAN TEXT IN ITS NORMAL STYLE. IT TAKES A MUCH LONGER TIME TO PROCESS AND IS VERY DISTRACTING. Perhaps, the previous sentences help to prove the point.

No personal attacks; no biting; no eye-gouging. There is simply no place for attacks on another list member or anyone else. It is unprofessional and unpleasant. The person who really looks bad is the person who makes the remarks. There is no reason not to be civil on the list. Certainly, do not inappropriately slam judges, registers, and others. Some of them participate in this list.

Do not assume that your message is confidential. Some legal mailing lists strive to protect confidentiality, restricting participation to, say, plaintiffs' attorneys in medical malpractice. That is simply not possible with State Bar lists. Participation in the list is open to all members of the section and membership in the section is open to all members of the State Bar. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent a reader from forwarding a message to someone else or simply printing it off and handing it to someone else. If one wants to send a confidential message, she should not use a mailing list.

Often it helps to delete unnecessary text when making a reply. The system automatically includes the previous posting(s) when a reply is made to the list. If the reply is the eight one to an original posting, that includes quite a lot of baggage. It can be helpful to delete much of what was said earlier. For example, only the relevant passage can be included. For example: "Mary Contrary said 'xyxyxy' last night. I disagree, because zwxzww."

This can be overdone. If a message is posted on the 1st of the month and a reply is made on the 16th and the original question is deleted entirely, the response may be totally incomprehensible unless the subject line alone gives enough contexts.

The topic is legal issues relevant to the section.. We can do without postings on politics and religion. Humor is also very dangerous. It is often not particularly appreciated.

Learn to manage your own subscriptions. You have essentially two choices on mail delivery. First, you can decide whether you want your mail delivery enabled. For example, you may wish to disable delivery when you are on vacation, so no emails pile up while you are gone. Second, you can choose to receive a digest version in which the postings are grouped together in one email, roughly once per day. Your friendly list administrator tries to help, but things can be done much more timely when you do it yourself.

Auto responders are very annoying. A person who sends a message to the list is probably not happy to receive back a message saying "Mary Contrary is having a wonderful time at the beach and is not reading your silly, tedious email. Don't you wish you were like me?" If you do not want to receive mail while you are gone, simply change your settings to Nomain. You can always check up on what you missed by going to the archives.



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Remember that you can only send and respond from the address you gave when you signed up for the list. Messages can be forwarded, but the process cannot be reversed.