Intel IT creates and publishes articles for Intel employees to educate them on a variety of information technology subjects. Our goal is to help them improve productivity, take advantage of new IT services and raise awareness on other IT topics of interest. We've modified these articles from their original version for sharing with external audiences.

Make sure to mind your instant messaging manners

Ways to properly use instant messaging, and things to avoid

Remember the days when people in the office actually called other people when they had a question? Or better yet—they actually got up, walked all the way over to the other person's cubicle or office, and asked the question in person. Those days are all but gone, courtesy of instant messaging (IM) software. In as quick as a single click, you can converse via written or spoken word with another connected person via your shared network.

But there's a price for virtual convenience. Unlike face-to-face conversations, you don't have visual cues to help tell you if you've committed a faux pas. So how to know if you're performing proper IM etiquette?

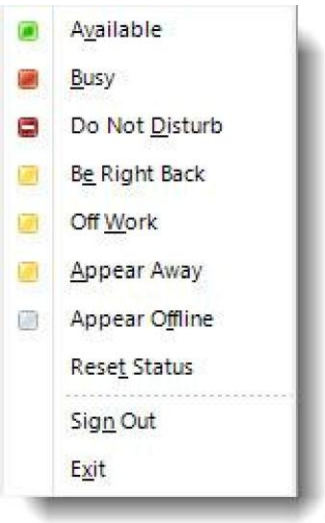

Figure 1: Your Status tells people if you're truly available to respond to an IM.

Here's a list of several types of Do's and Don'ts during instant messaging.

1. **When making initial communication:**
   - **Do** "knock first." Ask if the other party is willing to engage in an IM dialog by initiating contact with "Got a second?", "Quick Question?", "Are you free?", "IM?" or something similar.
   - **Don't** barge in. Typing a statement or question without saying hello first is considered rude.
   - **Do** respond to introductory questions with an equally to-the-point reply ("Right here," "Go ahead," "Not now, busy."). If possible, give a time when you might be available.

- **Don't** ignore the opening "knock." If you don't reply at all, people might get the point that you are, in fact, busy, or perhaps you've just stepped away from your desk. But it could still be considered arrogant (especially if your
- Status indicates you're available). Also, if you're the person who made the initial IM request, acknowledge the recipient's answer so they're not left hanging, waiting for you to start the meeting you requested.
- **Do** set your Status in the software to reflect your current status so people will know if you can be contacted (see Figure 1).
- **Don't** ignore the recipient's status, particularly if they say they are "Busy". If the other party declines, respect their decision and try again later.

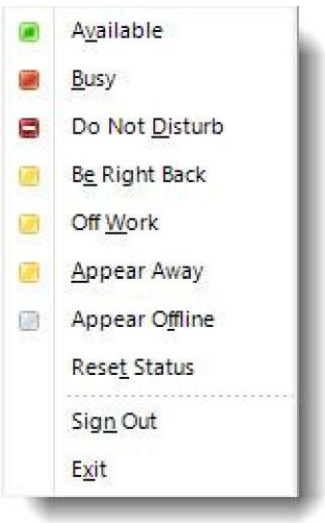

Figure 1: Your Status tells people if you're truly available to respond to an IM.

2. **During a "conversation":**

- **Do** keep the conversation fast-paced. Be brief and type fast, by using abbreviations. Don't bother to correct typos, which are acceptable in this function (both from you and your conversant).
- **Don't** overdo it with jargon. Acronyms can speed up your writing, but not everyone may know the definition of a particular abbreviated word. For example, how many of these do you know? "LOL," "TTYL," "F2F," "BTW," "OIC." Also, keep in mind cultural norms. A popular expression in one country might not be understandable in a different country.
- **Do** feel free to express yourself with the use of emoticons (see Figure 2). These can save time when trying to indicate approval or disapproval about a topic.
- **Don't** write anything in your IM conversation that you would not want to appear somewhere else. Like emails, instant messages can be saved and circulated.

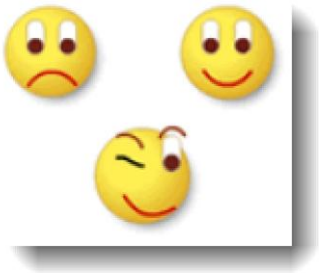

Figure 2: Emoticons can save you time when you want to express approval or disapproval about a topic.

3. **Ending the IM:**

- **Do** end it quickly, when done. Just say "goodbye," or something similar, and get out. It is acceptable to send "got to run" or some similar short phrase and quit IM without waiting for a response.
- **Don't** send more than one message ending with "bye" or "later", or an equivalent parting phrase. Once one party says goodbye, it is acceptable for the other to say nothing or to respond with a similar response.

4. **Miscellaneous etiquette:**

- **Do** use IM sensibly. Instant messaging is not your only option. If it's easier to reach across the aisle and ask someone a question, or if you need a more-detailed answer from an email or phone call, leave IM for another time.
- **Don't** use instant messaging as a way to hold a second, informal conversation during a meeting. This is the equivalent of surfing the Web during someone's presentation. As tempting as it might be to do otherwise, keep your mind on the meeting at hand.

Key:
LOL Laugh Out Loud
TTYL Talk to You Later
F2F Face to Face
BTW By the Way
OIC Oh I See

For more straight talk on current topics from Intel's IT leaders, visit www.intel.com/it.

This paper is for informational purposes only. THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED "AS IS" WITH NO WARRANTIES WHATSOEVER, INCLUDING ANY WARRANTY OF MERCHANTABILITY, NONINFRINGEMENT, FITNESS FOR ANY PARTICULAR PURPOSE, OR ANY WARRANTY OTHERWISE ARISING OUT OF ANY PROPOSAL, SPECIFICATION OR SAMPLE. Intel disclaims all liability, including liability for infringement of any proprietary rights, relating to use of information in this specification. No license, express or implied, by estoppel or otherwise, to any intellectual property rights is granted herein.

Intel and the Intel logo are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.
* Other names and brands may be claimed as the property of others.

Copyright © Intel Corporation. All rights reserved.

Printed in USA Please Recycle 1111/JLG/PDF