

Laptop Etiquette: Advice for Students

Reading the newspaper and doing crossword puzzles in class have existed as popular diversions for years. However, laptops (especially those with Internet connections) promise a new level of distraction for students and threaten the instructional focus of the classroom environment.

As a student, it is important to consider the power of wired or wirelessly connected devices and to use that power appropriately. Never before has a student had the ability to maintain a physical presence in a classroom while communicating with the outside world in such a way as is possible with modern electronic devices. Having the Internet at your fingertips has tremendous benefits to you as a student, both in its ability for independent exploration and clarification of ideas discussed in the classroom. However, there are some factors to be aware of.

Here are some important guidelines for you to consider:

Stay on Task

- **Stay focused, stay engaged.** Remember, you are in the classroom for one reason and one reason only: to learn. While your actual motivation to attend class may differ from day to day and from class to class, as a student your primary responsibility is to immerse yourself in the material as fully as possible.
- **Keep the outside world outside.** We all tend to daydream and allow our thoughts to divert from the instruction at hand, but it's important when we walk into the classroom to try to put down everything else going on in our lives and devote our attention and energy on topic. Researching study abroad programs, looking for cheap airfares or instant messaging with friends all detract from our role as a learner.
- **Contribute, don't detract, from the atmosphere of learning.** We are all receptive to and influenced by social cues from our surroundings about how we are expected to act in any given environment.

Don't Distract Others

- **Don't distract others by your use.** As a constantly developing social forum, Internet usage isn't always just an individual enterprise.
- **Don't annoy or distract the professor and his/her classroom.** Do you really want to draw the attention of an unhappy faculty member responsible for giving you a grade?
- **Keep it silent -- mute.** Even if it's so faint that the lecturer has no idea you're watching the SNL Narnia rap video, if you can hear your speakers then so can people around you. Remember to mute your laptop.
- **If you must surf, surf alone.** Don't try to include your neighbors in your off-task surfing, no matter how funny or shocking content you come across may be.

- **Keep your reactions to yourself.** If the rest of the class isn't laughing, then neither should you.
- **Minimize activity.** We all get distracted anytime someone acts or moves in a way that isn't consistent with the rest of the class. Likewise, unusual or excessive activity on a screen can be very distracting to everyone around you.
- **Do not access inappropriate or offensive content in class.**
- **Be wary of potentially distracting typing and clicking.**
- **Minimize set up/packing time.**

Don't Distract Yourself

- **Keep non-classroom related communication to a minimum.** This includes MSN. MSN should not be running during classroom hours.
- **Once is enough!** Beware of excessive email-checking. Don't waste all your time in class hoping for a new message.
- **Class time isn't work time.** Class can sometimes seem like a perfect opportunity to take care of the business side of our lives. Updating your web sites and profiles, banking and paying bills online, and writing emails and are all examples of the kinds of things that can distract us from our real reason to be in the classroom.
- **Forget about the slide show.** If the pictures aren't being shown on the projector by the professor, then we can pretty much assume that they shouldn't be shown on your screen either.
- **Respect privacy concerns, including your own.**

Source: University of Wisconsin – Madison

http://www.doit.wisc.edu/network/wireless/advice_stu.asp