

Smileys and Conveying Emotion.

Electronic messaging can be a pretty sterile medium. Without the subtle signals carried by tone of voice or facial expression, words can be interpreted quite differently than the author intended. For example, if somebody has made a mistake and receives the message "Nice job." , the message is open to interpretation. Was the sender just joking (as might have been indicated by a smile and lighter tone of voice), or was the message intended as an insult (with a heavier tone of voice and no smile)?

To alleviate this confusion, several methods have been developed to send information about the tone of the message. Probably the most common are Smileys (or emoticons). If you look at this :) sideways, it becomes a happy face, indicating that the author means for the statement to be interpreted as if it was spoken with a smile. Several other examples, taken from the Internet's Complete Emoticons List include :

:~)

the normal smiling face, appended to a sentence or an article, means 'this is a joke' or 'this is supposed to make you laugh'

:-(

sad face, 'that comment makes me sad [mad]'

;-)

mischievous wink (take this message with a grain of salt)

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