Chatrooms

1. Internet Relay Chat (IRC)

Internet Relay Chat is a means of communicating with one or more people over the internet in a discussion by typing the conversation on your computer so that others can see it on their computers and reply in the same way making what's called a **discussion forum** or **message board** and it's all done in real time. The program which is used is called a chat client.

2. Using a chat client

The most popular client for Windows is mIRC. Once you have downloaded and installed this you are ready to start chatting. Remember chatting is by typing not by voice (though there are ways to use voice).
Alternatively you can chat via websites, Internet Service Providers such as AOL or BT Internet, or Portals such as Yahoo! or MSN. And if you just want to send instant messages to your friends and family in your own list of contacts you can use Windows Messenger.

3. Finding chatrooms of interest

There are some things to consider first
3.1 If you are unsure when beginning it may be best to use a **chatroom** which is moderated ie conversations are checked (either by a person or by a computer) to ensure that no untoward behaviour is taking place.
3.2 Choose one which prominently displays safety messages.
3.3 Choose one which caters for your age group or your particular interests. For example www.ukchatterbox.co.uk has a large number of **chatrooms** catering for different sorts of

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ages/interests/localities.

Habbohotel **HABBO** www.habbo.co.uk is aimed at teenagers and young adults and has a number of groups you can join.

Facebook **facebook** www.facebook.com and Twitter www.twitter.com **twitter** and many other similar sites have chat facilities. Or use a search engine and type in your interest followed by "chat" and see what comes up.

4. Using web-based chatrooms

When you have found your **chatroom** then you will have to register to take part. A good **chatroom** will not ask for more than the minimum of personal information. Once registered you can take part. You join in a "room" where a conversation is taking place and you add your tuppence worth to the conversation by typing what you want to say.

5. Private chats

Sometimes there is the facility to talk to just one particular person taking part on their own rather than in the general chat.

6. Netiquette

This covers use in emails and forums as well as **chatrooms**.

6.1 In general be polite. Don't write something that you wouldn't say to someone's face. Remember that it's like a public place.

6.2 Don't type all in capitals as this is regarded as SHOUTING.

6.3 Don't send multiple emails which could be regarded as spam.

7. Avatars

An Avatar is a representation of who you are in the form of a drawing or cartoon which can be used in certain **chatrooms**.

It may be just a copy of a cartoon available on the web or it may be a likeness or sketch you have drawn yourself. Or there are websites which allow you to create one eg choosing clothing and faces. It may show something about you eg playing a musical instrument or playing a game or it may be animated.

8. Personal safety issues with acknowledgement to www.ukchatterbox.co.uk

8.1 Beware! "Some people online are dangerous. They may not necessarily be who you think they are, so you must not tell them your real name and address or give them any personal details or means to contact you off the internet".

8.2 Don't "publish your email address in the chat rooms". Instead use the **chatroom** "website messaging system (your inbox) which can be used to leave messages for people to see when they login".

8.3 "Do not share details about your routines. Do not tell people which school/college/work you go to or the places you often visit".

8.4 "Never initiate a one-on-one meeting with anyone you chat to on the internet".

8.5 "Do not open any website links given to you - they could contain spyware, viruses or disturbing material".

9. Discussion forums (message boards) – see also para 6.7 Newsgroups.

Discussion forums are similar to chat rooms in that they allow you to communicate with others by typing messages but they are aimed at either posting messages for the world to see or for discussions about particular topics with people of like mind who have joined the same forum. These can range from sport to music to technical – you name it, whatever your interest there's bound to be a forum for it.

Most of the forums will require you to register, just like **chatrooms** though sometimes you can take part as a guest. Communication takes various forms such as **posts**, **threads**, and **private messages**.

The **post** is where the first message is left, perhaps asking for comments.

The **thread** is where other people respond to the post in the form of comments, or further questions.

Private messages are just between two or more individual members and are not open to general discussion.

Examples are
Yahoo Message boards,
IVillage Message boards

YAHOO! MESSAGE BOARDS
iVillage.co.uk

10. Smileys and jargon

Smileys are pictures made up of symbols available on your keyboard. :-) is where the term originated (a sideways smiling face!). However these are now available in graphic form called **emoticons**. You use these to give an indication of how you are feeling!

Other examples of **smileys** are

sad :-(

shocked or surprised :o

bored or awkward =I

All these have alternatives.

Lots of **jargon** is used in **chatrooms** and **discussion forums** and is similar to that used in text messages.

Examples are

afaik - as far as I know

brb - be right back

btw - by the way

chick is a girl

dude is a guy

iow - in other words