

General Use of Computing and Network Resources

Lamar University faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to use campus-wide resources as well as the Internet. Access to these limited resources is provided for a wide variety of purposes. It is important that each user understand their obligations and what constitutes proper use and conduct.

Users should utilize resources in a manner that is consistent with the instructional, research, public service, and administrative objectives of Lamar University.

Appropriate use demonstrates a respect for:

- * the privacy rights of others;
- * intellectual property rights (e.g., licenses and copyrights);
- * ownership and custodianship of data and information resources;
- * system mechanisms designed to limit access;
- * ethical use of state-owned resources; and
- * the right of individuals to be free of intimidation, harassment, and unwarranted annoyance.

Users should note that Federal and State laws as well as the Texas State University System and Lamar University policies also govern the usage of computing resources. Violation of Federal and State laws or Lamar University policies may result in immediate suspension of computing access privileges, with referral to appropriate Lamar University authorities for consideration of other appropriate penalties.

Unethical and Illegal Conduct

Actions that may create problems fall into the following categories. This list, while not exhaustive, should provide the basis of what constitutes illegal or unethical on-line conduct.

Break-Ins

- * Users may not attempt to gain access to computer systems on or off campus to which they have not been granted access.

Abuse

Users may not:

- * perform any willful act which endangers or damages any specific computer software, hardware, program, network, data or the system as a whole, on campus or elsewhere on the global Internet;
- * create or purposefully allow a computer malfunction or interruption of operation;
- * inject a computer virus or worm into a computer system;

- * send a message with the intent to disrupt university operations or the operations of outside entities;
- * produce output that occupies or monopolizes information resources for an unreasonable time period to the detriment of other authorized users;
- * perform computing tasks that consume an unreasonable amount of communications bandwidth, such as peer-to-peer applications, either on or off campus, to the detriment of other authorized users; or
- * fail to adhere to time limitations that apply at particular computer facilities on campus.

Eavesdropping

All information on a computer system “belongs” to somebody; some information may be private or personal and other information may be confidential, such as trade secrets or classified material.

Users may not:

- * read, execute, or access a file owned by or in the custody of another user unless the owner or custodian has granted permission; or
- * seek to intercept network transmissions intended for other network users.

Theft

Under the terms of the Berne Convention and copyright laws of the United States and most other nations, all intellectual property is granted copyright protection as soon as it is committed to a tangible medium, including information resident in computer files.

Users may not:

- * copy or redistribute other information without the explicit permission of the owner;
- * copy or redistribute software, copyrighted or not; or
- * attempt to override copy protection on commercial software.

Password Violations

Users may not:

- * attempt to impersonate or represent someone by sending forged information such as e-mail;
- * ever give their password to anyone;
- * seek to determine another person’s password, through cracking, decryption, interception or other means; or
- * fail to protect their password or Lamar Electronic Account from unauthorized use.

Tampering

Users may not:

- * deliberately attempt to disrupt the performance of a computer system or a network, on or off-campus;
- * attempt to break system security;
- * re-configure computer systems to impair or compromise their intended function or to make them partially or totally unusable by others;
- * attempt to destroy or alter data or software belonging to other users; or
- * modify any wiring or extend the Lamar University Residential Computing Network access to anyone outside of assigned locations.

Negligence and Misuse

Users have general responsibility for computing activity that takes place in their Lamar Electronic Accounts (LEA).

- * Users are responsible for any files stored in their LEA(s) and for computing activity generated from their LEA(s);
- * Computer LEAs are generally limited to Lamar University students, faculty, and staff. Individuals or organizations not associated with Lamar University are not granted LEAs unless the President or President's designee gives specific approval.
- * Users may not use Lamar University computing and network resources for personal business or profit-making activities.

Annoyance and Harassment

Users may not:

- * use the network in a manner that violates other University policies, such as racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or other forms of harassment; or
- * use University resources for transmission of spam mail, chain letters or personal advertisements, solicitations or promotions.

Software Usage

Computer software should be used in accordance with license agreement and software copyright law. Unauthorized use or duplication of software is contrary to Lamar University standards of conduct. A University license does not guarantee individuals personal duplication and distribution rights on University or personal computers. Personal licenses do not guarantee authorized use on University computers. Users do not own software they purchase or register, but rather, become a licensed user with rights to use the software, in most cases, on a single computer. There should be no illegal distribution or sharing of software with persons outside or within the University including students, clients, customers, family, or friends. This pertains to major productivity applications as well as proprietary fonts, templates, and other data; run-time packages; operating systems and utilities such as disk utilities; screen savers; terminate-and-stay-resident programs; desk accessories; internet downloads; and shareware.

There are risks associated with unauthorized software usage. According to the US Copyright Act, illegal reproduction of software is subject to civil damages, criminal penalties, extensive fines and imprisonment. Any University personnel who makes, acquires, distributes, or uses unauthorized copies of software may be subject to termination or other disciplinary action.

Each user plays an important role in preventing illegal software usage. Report any suspected or known misuse of software to the Information Technology Services Help Desk.

Use of Electronic Mail

Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to use electronic mail, or e-mail, for University related activities and to facilitate the efficient exchange of useful information. Access to email is a privilege and certain responsibilities accompany that privilege. E-mail users are expected to be ethical and responsible in their use of this technology. E-mail messages should meet the same standards for distribution or display as tangible (hard copy) documents or instruments. The author should be clearly and accurately identifiable in all electronic communications. The author of an e-mail message should never conceal or misrepresent their own name or affiliation in order to dissociate one's self from responsibility for their own actions. Alteration of the source of an electronic message or posting is always unethical and may be illegal.

E-mail users must be sensitive to the inherent limitations of shared network resources. No computer security system can absolutely prevent a determined person from gaining unauthorized access to stored information. While Lamar University has no interest in regulating the content of e-mail, Lamar University cannot guarantee the privacy or confidentiality of electronic documents. Good judgment dictates that e-mail messages be created and transmitted with the understanding that e-mail is no more secure than other forms of communication, and that e-mail may be an inappropriate vehicle for transmitting personal and/or confidential information.

E-mail users must respect the rights of others, and must not send abusive, threatening, or harassing materials to other users. While debate on controversial issues is both inevitable and essential, it is each user's responsibility to debate in such a way that advances the cause of learning and mutual understanding.

E-mail users are expected to promote efficient use of network resources consistent with the instructional, research, public service, and administrative goals of Lamar University. Users must show consideration for others and refrain from engaging in activities that would interfere with the work of others, or otherwise disrupt the intended use of network resources. E-mail users should avoid wasteful and disruptive practices, such as initiating or forwarding "chain letters" or "broadcast messages."

E-mail and other network resources may not be used for commercial purposes or for personal gain (Gov. Code 403.273d, Penal Code 39.02a). This does not preclude the use of e-mail to assist in the investigation and support of a vendor's products. For example, one may discuss a product's relative advantages and disadvantages by users of the product, the distribution of information or technical support material by request, or vendor responses to questions about their products. It is illegal to advertise personal items

via e-mail. The same standards of conduct expected of faculty, staff, and students regarding the use of telephones, libraries, campus mail, and other institutional resources apply to the use of email. Users will be held no less accountable for their actions in situations involving e-mail than they would in dealing with other Lamar University resources. Users are expected to abide by the security restrictions of all systems and information to which they have access. E-mail users should avoid any communication where the meaning of a message, or its transmission or distribution, would be illegal, unethical, or irresponsible. Conduct that involves the use of information resources to violate a Lamar University policy or regulation, or to violate another's rights, is a serious abuse. Such conduct will subject offending users to limitations of their computing privileges and other appropriate disciplinary action.