

VDLHOA Members Discussion Board Rules of Play

A discussion board is a forum on a Website provided for the discussion of a specific topic or a set of related topics. The purpose of the VDLHOA Members Discussion Board is to provide an online forum for VDLHOA Members to post and discuss a wide variety of topics that may be of interest to VDLHOA Members.

A set of topics have been provided so that postings to the discussion board can be categorized by specific interests. Additional topics can be added to the discussion board by sending a request to the administrator at webmaster@vdlhoa.org.

The VDLHOA Members Discussion Board is not intended as a primary means of communicating with VDL Board Members, VDL Committees, or VDLHOA Members. All direct communication with those listed above should take place through other means such as mail, telephone, or e-mail. The VDLHOA Members Discussion Board is not a place to report issues, lodge complaints, or make requests that would normally be directed toward Board Members, Committee Chairpersons, or Committee Members.

Posting to the discussion board is provided as a privilege to members of the Vista Del Lago Home Owners' Association. To set up an account, contact webmaster@vdlhoa.org. The general public is not able to create or view postings. By requesting an account, members agree to adhere to the "Rules of Play" and to follow "Discussion Board Etiquette". Any posting to the discussion board may be reviewed or removed and/or access to the discussion board may be suspended if it is determined that the member fails to adhere to the Rules of Play and/or Discussion Board Etiquette.

Discussion Board Etiquette

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1. **Get Educated.** Read the Terms of Service or Rules of Play for the particular website. While most sites will have similar rules, there can be key differences from community to community, so it's a good idea to acquaint yourself with what is allowed and what is not. In addition, many forums may have special "house rules", such as which topics should be posted in which folders. These guidelines are often labeled READ THIS FIRST or GUIDELINES, or are included in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).
2. **Read Before Participating.** It's best to browse a message board for a while before you post your first message. Read a couple weeks' worth of messages the first time you visit a board, and then read new messages for another couple of days. You'll see what topics are hot and which are cold, you'll get to know some of the key participants, and you'll become familiar with the demeanor of the board.

3. **Communicate Clearly.** Write clearly when you compose a message. Review your message carefully before clicking **Send**. Typos can be confusing. Remember, if your message can be misunderstood, it will be.
4. **Refrain from using ALL CAPS.** Typing in all capital letters is frowned upon; it's the equivalent of screaming. It's considered an aggressive way to post and it doesn't come off as being very friendly. It also makes your message more difficult to read. Moderators often delete topics or posts that use ALL CAPS.
5. **Utilize Formatting Codes and Smilies.** Since tone can be difficult to convey simply using the written word, most forums are equipped with coding options (such as HTML and BB Code) and smilies. Using these options can help clarify what you are saying. Italicizing a word may help the reader understand what you are stressing. Putting a winking smiley in your message will help show you are just kidding or teasing and help avoid a person taking a comment personally.
6. **Correction and Retraction.** If you realize that you made a mistake in a previous message, please add a new message acknowledging the mistake and correcting it promptly. You will find most people are understanding of mistakes if they are dealt with immediately.
7. **Be Respectful, Kind and Honest.** Don't issue personal attacks, use profanity, or post threatening, abusive, harassing, or otherwise offensive language or images. Keep your messages appropriate and courteous at all times. Please disagree with other opinions respectfully. If you are unsure if something is inappropriate, ask yourself these questions: Would you say it to the person if she were standing right in front of you? Would you say it to your best friend or loved one? Are you calling someone names? How would you feel and react if faced with the same message from someone else? If it would anger or upset you, you might consider re-framing your thoughts in a less objectionable tone.
8. **Personal Communication.** Personal messages, and especially critical comments, are more appropriate when sent directly and privately. Many forums have a private messaging feature that can be utilized for this purpose. If not, an e-mail to the individual is also an acceptable option.
9. **Problems with Another Poster.** If you find yourself having a problem with another poster, it is poor form to voice your concerns on the forum. It is much better to contact the moderator or webmaster privately through email or private-message.
10. **Respect Family-Friendly Sites.** Because of the nature of the internet, you cannot be sure who may be reading your post. If you are on a site that is considered family-friendly, try to use only appropriate language in your post. Consider that children may also read your messages.

11. **Trolls.** Ignore "trolls." Some people get a thrill from posting *flames* (really obnoxious messages) just to get a rise out of others. The best way to make them go away is to ignore them; they'll get bored and go somewhere else.
12. **Be Careful When Posting Personal Information.** Be careful about including private information about yourself, such as phone numbers and street addresses. It's not only a personal risk to you, but can also make other members of a community feel uncomfortable or wary. If you must share information of that nature, it should be sent by e-mail or private message.
13. **Be Kind to Newcomers a/k/a Noobs.** Writing a first topic on a forum can be daunting, so please be friendly and welcoming. Also, while trolls are a reality, and sometimes members may feel apprehensive about opening up to those they don't know, remember that everyone was a "newbie" at one time or another. It is best to extend the benefit of the doubt to guests and new members.
14. **Respecting the Forums.** Most Message Boards and Forums are provided as a service to the internet community. As a result, posting on forums should be viewed as a privilege, not a right. You would not consider acting hostile or inappropriately in a restaurant or other "public" location, and therefore you should not expect the right to do so on a forum.
15. **Respecting the Moderators and Owners.** Just as the world needs law enforcement to help keep the peace, Message Boards often employ moderators to help enforce the rules and keep things running smoothly. Most do so on a voluntary basis. While you may not agree with them, moderators are there for the general better of the community, and should be afforded respect and courtesy. If you have a problem with a moderator, you should contact the webmaster privately through email or private-message.
16. **Freedom of Speech.** The U.S. Bill of Rights allows citizens the right to free speech in a public forum without limitations imposed by the State/Government. Most message boards are not actually public forums, but rather private forums open to the public. While you will find most communities allow free and open discussion, private communities have a right to limit what is discussed and how it is discussed, as well as defining what is appropriate behavior for their forums. Freedom of speech is not the right to say something *anywhere* you want, but the right to say it *somewhere*. Freedom of Speech is the right to find another forum where you can speak your mind, or the right to start your own community in which to discuss what you wish. If you do not like the rules of a particular community, it is best if you find another which is more to your comfort level.
17. **Remember the Golden Rule.** It is very easy to misinterpret a person's word when you cannot see them and/or hear their tone, so please keep in mind the Golden Rule of Message Board Etiquette: Its not just what you say, its *how* you say it.

