***icanews***

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

**What is a newsgroup?**

It’s an Internet community which is dedicated to a particular topic of interest - a sort of electronic notice board.

It is a closed group, which means it is only available to approved members by invitation.

**How does it work?**

A message on a newsgroup is called a ‘post’. It may be a response to a previous post or be a new post. People reading the newsgroup can reply to any post and in this way a discussion or ‘thread’ is formed. All subscribers can post and read messages.

**How do I subscribe?**

All ICA members are entitled to subscribe but you need to agree to the newsgroup conditions and be signed up before you can start using it.

**How do I post a message?**

Posting a message is like sending any email. Our newsgroup’s email address is: icanews@yahoogroups.com so just type the relevant name in the TO box, enter the SUBJECT, then type your comment or questions and hit SEND**.**

If you want to respond to a newsgroup message, just highlight the message and hit REPLY - but be careful, within minutes your reply will appear on the newsgroup - for **everyone** to read.

That's why we need newsgroup etiquette (see below).

You may prefer to reply directly to the sender without your message going back to the whole newsgroup. You can do this by sending the author a personal email, rather than hitting REPLY.

If the sender of the message has not included their personal email address, just scroll to the bottom of the message, where you will see these reply options, and use the second one:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reply via web post | Reply to sender | Reply to group | Start a new topic | Messages in this topic |

**Who uses the newsgroup?**

Most members are consumer specialists, based in trading standards, CABx and other advice services, but not exclusively. Members also come from many other consumer related organisations, including business, government departments, NGOs, universities and other like-minded individuals or organisations.

This means that members make up a network, which is one of the most knowledgeable, helpful and practical consumer advice resources available today - allowing you to tap into the combined knowledge and expertise of ICA members.

**What about confidentiality?**

The newsgroup is restricted to named members and circulation of newsgroup messages to any other party is forbidden.

Members pay for the newsgroup through subscriptions, so only paying a single subscription but copying the information to colleagues is not just unfair to all the members who *are* paying, it's also a breach of thenewsgroup conditions. We can't prevent people from forwarding newsgroup information, but misuse will result in automatic removal from the newsgroup.

If you are seeking information for a third party, you must make it clear when you request the information, so that other members can decide how to respond.

When discussing cases, you may find it easier to attach copy contracts or correspondence but before posting you must remove consumer’s names and those of traders, or any details by which they could be identified.

**What sort of thing, can I use the newsgroup** **for?**

You can:

* Request advice or information on a case you are dealing with
* Pose questions on issues and cases
* Seek or provide information on current, new and proposed consumer legislation

# Give or ask for information on failed businesses, scams, rogue traders, home authorities, etc.

* Discuss issues like best practice, case law, government policy and consultations – any consumer related subject.
* Let other members know what’s happening in your area.

**What can't I post on the newsgroup?**

The group is not to be used for any unauthorised commercial activity. For example, if you want to advertise a vacancy or any other commercial editorial, there is a charge. For details, contact Jacqui King on: membership@icanet.org.uk

If you post a commercial message, without authority, ICA will automatically invoice you.

....and obviously, it's not the right place to share your personal information, photographs or jokes. If that's what you want, join Facebook!

**Can I have my newsgroup messages, all in one place?**

As it is a Yahoo group, you can choose to read messages on the website if you prefer not to fill up your inbox. You can receive your newsgroup mail in a ‘daily digest’ and read the messages at your leisure. However, the digest will not include any attachments. They can only be saved when uploaded onto the newsgroup website files.

**Who can I contact if I need help?**

Our Newsgroup Manager, Marie-Helene Kutek, provides an exceptional service in dealing with technical queries and problems, changing email addresses when necessary, and stopping message loops when someone has forgotten to turn off their ‘out of office reply’.

If you have a question or need technical help, please contact Marie-Helene on: newsgroupmanager@icanet.org.uk If you have a question about your membership or subscription, or need any other information about using the newsgroup, contact Jacqui King on: membership@icanet.org.uk

**What if I change my email address?**

Just let Jacqui know your new details and she’ll update the membership database and amend your newsgroup connection.

**What is newsgroup etiquette?**

It's really just about good manners and consideration for other subscribers. A newsgroup is only successful if **all** subscribers respect other users by:

* not blocking inboxes unnecessarily
* treating all messages as confidential
* turning off your ‘out of office reply’
* including your own contact details in case people want to reply to you personally
* never forgetting thatyour messages go to **everyone** -so think before hitting REPLY

**What happens if I don't switch off my ‘out of office’ reply?**

Your *‘out of office reply’* message will respond to newsgroup emails, just like any other emails. This means that when yourreplygoes to the newsgroup, it will also be sent back to you - so another *‘out of office reply’* will be generated. This could go on indefinitely, with dozens of your *‘out of office replies’* appearing on the newsgroup.

Obviously it would make you very unpopular, and until you return and switch it off, it can only be halted by Marie-Helene. Thanks to her vigilance, we rarely get more than one *‘out of office reply’* before she disables it. But we do have a **‘three strikes and you’re out’** policy. This means that persistent offenders will be removed from the newsgroup. There is an option to use a home email address as an alternative to removal.

You can ask your system administrator to customise the function not to respond to newsgroups. Or you can customise your own mail settings on the newsgroup website by choosing a *‘no mail’* option for the time you are away. If you have difficulty with this, please contact Marie-Helene or Jacqui.

To protect both our members and the integrity of the group, all members are required to read and adhere to the newsgroupconditions and guidance on good practice.

Finally, our members say that the best thing about ICA membership is being able to ask everyone else for help – and getting answers. So, don’t be afraid to ask a question – or to wade in if you can help your colleagues with an answer.