THE PONYVILLE MODERATOR'S
HOOFBOOK

Rules and Procedure for Ponyville.us Staff

I. What is the Role of the Moderator?

First and foremost, thank you for being a part of our staff here at Ponyville.us. I hope you've found that your time here as a staff member has already been fun and productive. You'll notice that perhaps unlike other jobs you've undertaken in the past, our Moderators and staff are a fairly laid back group. We make jokes, we have fun, and we share little stories with each other.

When it comes to handling reports, discussing policies, or issuing bans however, the staff can become quite serious in its duties. But let's pause there for a moment—what are the duties of a Moderator? What is expected of a staff member here on Ponyville? We'll find out, starting with just how Ponyville defines the term "Moderator."

A. The Moderator as a Concept

Here on Ponyville, generally speaking, all of our staff are encouraged to lend their ideas to the collective discussion that occurs on our Discord chat channel. Our Administrators, Developers, and Moderators can all talk at the round-table about the issues they feel require discussion. Maybe a developer needs additional time or resources to finish a project! Or perhaps this Moderator requires some alternative perspectives on how to handle a particular report! In any case, all of us staff operate as Moderators, and can act in our capacity not only as Administrators or Developers, but as Moderators as well.

A Moderator is, unglamourously perhaps, a custodian or janitor. All of us staff, from the Administrators, to our Moderators, are servants: servants to the users whom we clean up after, and whom we care for. The happiness of our users is just as important to our Developers as it is to our Moderators: as such, we all work together to solve issues that might impede that happiness.

Let's talk next then, about just what we do to solve issues!

B. The Duties and Responsibilities of a Moderator

You're in the Discord chat, you've got a snappy new Moderator trip-tag, and you're feeling ready to go out there and issues some bans! But hold on there skipper—the Duties and Responsibilities of a Moderator do not start at the report page! In fact, before you handle your first report, you have a few duties you owe to the community.

1. *Know the Community*

Before you can handle your first report, or participate in your first discussion, you will need to know the community. Now, if you've been selected for our staff, you've probably already got a pretty good idea about who's who and what's what! But what most posters don't know is that their exposure to communities on the site is usually limited to the group of posters they most enjoy spending time with! If you like to post only in controversial political threads, are you sure you know what's going on in that Serial Thread over there? If you like to fill up those music threads with toe-tapping tunes, are you sure you're familiar with the scuttlebutt in /Canterlot/?

Getting to know the posters you serve will help you to see from each of their perspectives. And whether it's handling reports or answering questions, having the right perspective makes all the difference!

2. *Know Yourself*

It's not enough to know the Community you've been asked to serve! You've got to know your own limits as well. You've been at work for fifteen hours, you've got work early in the morning, and *ping* a report pops up on the blotter. You think to yourself, "well, I'd like to be proactive, and handle that report!" But before you touch that mouse, ask yourself: am I really feeling okay to handle this right now? Perhaps the report comes from a long, two hundred post thread, where handling the issues requires a great deal of

reading! Will you, in your compromised, exhausted, and stressed state, be able to make a good judgment?

Take your time. Understand your limits. Understand your emotional limits, your time constraints, your deadlines, your priorities, and your capabilities. If you don't know anything computer development, are you really in a good position to handle Developer work? If you don't consider yourself very good at talking to depressed people, are you really sure you can handle that suicide thread on your own? There's no shame in admitting we're not the right mare for the job. In fact, it's commendable to *Understand Your Limits!*

3. Participate in the Community

You've done the required reading, and you've had a nice mug of tea and a good night's sleep. Now, you think to yourself, I'm ready to handle those reports. Oh, but not quite yet! There's one more step to being a good, responsible Moderator! You've got to know the community, and know yourself… but when that's said and done, you've also got to join in the community. Now, we all know you're busy! And being a Moderator can already be a lot of work! But you're here because this is a community you care about. Don't forget to enjoy the fruits of your labor from time to time!

It's easy to lose perspective as a Moderator and become jaded when one doesn't participate in the community as an equal from time to time. You start to feel detached from the community you serve. You become less like a servant to users you love, less like a mother goose caring for her goslings, and more like Zeus hurling lightning bolts from Olympus, or a child with a magnifying glass zapping ants.

A good Moderator is ultimately a community member, first and foremost. You don't have to post everyday: maybe not even every week! But you should still make the effort to post once in a while. Get down on the same level as the people you serve, and see the site from their eyes whenever possible. Without that perspective, you cannot be an effective Moderator.

Now that we've gotten the philosophy of being a Moderator out of the way, it's time to get to the meat and potatoes of your job: handling reports.

II.   <u>How to Handle Reports</u>

A. <u>Logging in for the First Time</u>

_____Every good Moderator deserves a fine office. Here at Ponyville, our office is completely digital! The Moderator Dashboard is where you'll be handling most of the work you do as a Moderator! If you're reading this, you've probably already received your Moderator Tripcode and Password, as well as the Dashboard link. If you cannot remember any of that information, make sure to message an Administrator as soon as possible for a refresher!

Put your assigned Moderator username into the username space, and your assigned password into the password space. Your password can be changed at a later date! Click confirm and presto: you've logged in.

B. <u>Functions of the Dashboard</u>

_____At first glance, the Dashboard can seem both pretty barebones, and pretty intimidating! But not to worry: the functions of the Dashboard are quite simple.

1. *The Boards Box*

At the top, you'll see the "Boards" box! This box allows you to quickly jump to any of the boards listed, including our test board, the Moderator board, and some of our hidden boards, too! There aren't many, but I bet those hidden boards are somewhat surprising! More surprising still, some of our more enterprising posters have found these boards out and are posting on them! It adds a bit of charm to the site, to have little nooks and crannies to explore, don't you think?

2. *The Messages Box*

Underneath that, you'll see your Messages box. It's seldom used, what with the advent of Discord and all, but on occasion you will see a message intended for you from either and Administrator or a fellow Moderator! In such a case, it's important for you to read and respond to that message right away: the system isn't used unless it's important!

3. *The Administration Box*

Here comes the most important box of them all! The Administration box is where you'll be checking reports, reviewing the ban list, reading through ban appeals, managing users, and checking the moderation log. All of these functions are very important.

First, let's click on the **Report Queue**. Reports that have been filed, but are unanswered, are stored here. You might see there are some reports there already! Always be sure, before you take an action such as deleting or responding to a report, to make sure no action is *currently being taken* or *has already been taken*. Likewise, make sure you always clear reports that you've handled by clicking the "Dismiss" button.

Underneath the Report Queue, you'll see the **Ban List**. Click on the Ban List. Good golly holly, look at all those bans! On Ponyville, we don't like to ban often. In fact, you'll find as you read that it's a policy of ours **not to ban if it can be avoided!** Nonetheless, some situations will require bans. Spammers, advertisement bots, and egregious rule breakers all require bans from time to time: the Ban list is a ledger that logs each and every ban issued, for what reason (if stated), in which boards, for how long, when the ban expires, and by which staff member!

Next on the list, we have our **Ban Appeals**. Click on the Ban Appeals. If any user on the site has received a ban they feel was delivered in error, they are always welcome to submit an appeal via the ban appeals page that appears on their ban screen. Any appeals submitted will be visible here. We'll go over Ban Appeal protocol later, but for now, just know that any appeals submitted will end up under this category.

We're going to skip ahead now to the **Moderation Log**. The Log is

like the Ban List, only instead of bans, it lists every single Moderator action taken! It shows what actions your fellow Moderators have taken, when they've taken these actions, and on what board they've taken actions in. Use the Moderation Log to make sure you aren't stepping on any Moderator's hooves, and to check for yourself just what's been going on that day!

The last box we're going to cover is the **Recent Posts** box. It can be hard sometimes to keep track of threads, especially when some of the longer serials can go on for hundreds of posts long after they've fallen off the frontpage and out of sight! You can use Recent Posts to see what discussions are happening where, and keep track of them in real time!
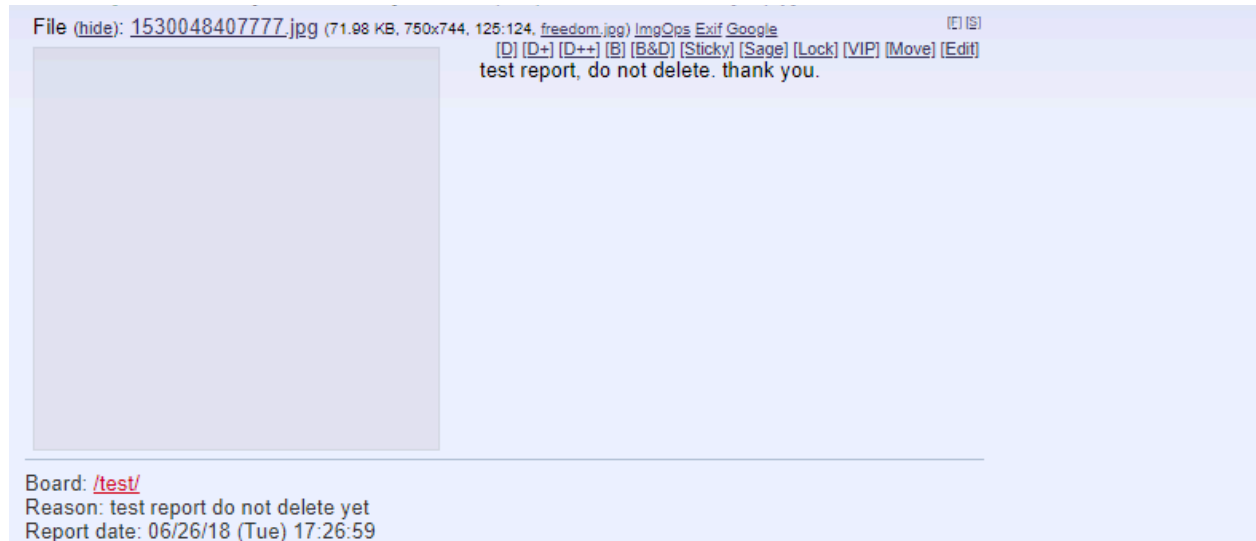
For now, these are the functions that you'll likely be using the most often as a Moderator! Our Developers are constantly improving the Dashboard, making it a more robust and useful tool for moderating. As the site improves, you can be sure our Hoofbook will be updated along with it!

C. The Syntax of Reports

Here it is: the most difficult and detailed section of the Hoofbook. If you've made it this far, you deserve a round of applause. Handling reports is the hay and potatoes of your job here at Ponyville.us. Make sure that you read this section of the Hoofbook carefully, and refer to it when making decisions on the reports you receive!

First, let's discuss our options! You've received a report: what actions can you take to resolve it? Take a look at Fig. 1, on the next page. You'll note that the IP of this post is hidden. Make sure to keep the IP's of yourself and our users secret and hidden, when at all possible! This is identifying information that we, as a staff, must do our best to protect for the sake of our community! Beneath the IP on a typical report, you'll also see Dismiss and Dismiss +: when a report has been handled, please dismiss the report so that it will no longer be in the report queue. Dismiss + is to be used when bans or warnings are necessary along with a dismiss, but we'll get to that!

<u>Fig. 1 The Anatomy of a Report</u>

File (hide): 1530048407777.jpg (71.98 KB, 750x744, 125:124, freedom.jpg) ImgOps Exif Google [F] [S]
[D] [D+] [D++] [B] [B&D] [Sticky] [Sage] [Lock] [VIP] [Move] [Edit]
test report, do not delete. thank you.

Board: /test/
Reason: test report do not delete yet
Report date: 06/26/18 (Tue) 17:26:59

Take a close look at this report! The post in question here is the actual target of the report. The reasoning for the report is listed where it says "Reason:" near the bottom of the report box. The date and time of the report are under the Reason, and the Board upon which the post was reported is located above the Reason.

Your options when handling reports are located above the actual text of the reported post: [D], [D+], [D++], [B], [B&D], [Sticky], [Sage], [Lock], [VIP], [Move], [Edit], as well as [F] and [S] in the top right corner of the box. Let's take a moment to discuss what those do!

1. [D] - Delete;
2. [D+] - Delete all posts by this IP, on the board this reported post was made;
3. [D++] - Delete all posts by IP on all boards (used against spammers, single-minded trolls, advertisement bots, etc.);
4. [B] - Ban (Brings up the ban page);
5. [B&D] - Ban and Delete;
6. [Sticky] - Pins the thread the post is in to the top of the front page;
7. [Sage] - Prevents further posts in the thread from bumping the thread to the top of the front page;
8. [Lock] - Prevents any further non-staff posts from being allowed in the thread;
9. [VIP] - Gives the user who made the post a special tag that identifies

them as a VIP in the thread. Good for special guests! Or birthdays!
10. [Move] - Moves the thread the post is in to another board
11. [Edit] - Use this to edit a user's posts!
   a. Please note, this is not to be used frivolously. *When can a user's posts be edited?*
      i. When issuing an in post warning directly to a user;
      ii. When censoring something that requires immediate action prior to further administrative action;
      iii. With the consent of the user;
      iv. For occasionally sanctioned fun (but please consult administration, and make sure your edit is *mostly harmless*)
12. [F] - Deletes any file attached to the post (usually, a picture or video)
13. [S] - Spoilers any file attached to the post

That's all there is, as far as the anatomy of a report! You now know what your options are, as far as the report box goes. But the actions you can take as a moderator go far beyond the scope of that report box! Your actions, both in words and deeds, are just as important as anything that happens in that report box.

Let's take a look now at when to use our report box options, and how to use those options, as well as discuss non-report box means of handling reports.

II. **<u>Handling Reports</u>**

_____Handling a report is a very delicate business! A ban applied without proper explanation, no matter how just, may cause substantial unrest. A moderator's job is to serve the community and keep things running smoothly: if by banning a user, you've created more chaos than if you hadn't acted, you've been a bigger problem than the user you've just banned!

We can avoid this situation by carefully following protocol. Consistent behavior, transparency in action, and careful measure make for a good staff, and a happy community! With that said, let's look very carefully at how to handle a report.

A. The Power of the Ban

      It's not uncommon for a new moderator to be a little bit on the ban heavy side! After all, what's the good in having that big heavy ban hammer if there's nothing to use it on? When all you've got is a hammer, everything looks like a nail! But you've got more than a hammer: you've got your fellow staff members, your community friends, and your handy-dandy Ponyville Moderator's Hoofbook!

On Ponyville, our policy is, and has always been, this: **Whenever possible, exercise lenience.** If a user enjoys their time on the site, it is likely that when they engage in rule-breaking behavior, it comes not from an intention to act maliciously, but from a lack of understanding of the rules and how those rules apply to their behavior. Before the bans come out, before even the warnings come out, see if you can steer the user on the right track through simple words. If the behavior is repeated, maybe issue a warning then, but also consider rephrasing your explanation, or engaging that user one-on-one to try and better explain why their behavior was rule-breaking.

Everybody on Ponyville is an important and valuable individual, and our staff strives to treat every single user with the respect and attention they deserve.

B. When to Ban Outright

      There are situations, however, where outright bans are called for. Sometimes, these bans might even be long, or permabans, right out of the gate! When are these kinds of bans justified?

1. Bots
    a. Ponyville is, unfortunately, no stranger to spam bots. If a bot tries to post an advertisement, or spams a board, feel free to ban that bot right away, and hit it with a perma! Then, don't forget to delete all posts by IP! A big mess can be cleaned up in mere seconds, with your handy mod tools

       b. Please exercise caution that when issuing a permaban against a bot, that you're targeting the right user, and that the user in question is, in fact, a bot. We haven't had any mixups yet, so let's keep our record spotless, alright?

2. Malicious Human Spammers

       a. Ponyville is, unfortunately, also no stranger to the malicious acts of trolls. From our very first day in existence, we have been hit with DDoS attacks, massive spam attacks, and other malicious human directed attacks. Whether it's a pornography spam, racist propaganda, or horrific gore, we are Ponyville's frontline defense, and a first-offense ban is appropriate here

              i. Note also though the intention of the user. Is the user's pornography malicious? Maybe it's a new user, ignorant of the rules! As a moderator, you will have to …

3. USE YOUR JUDGMENT

       a. Here it is! There will be other times when an outright ban is necessary. Use your judgment, look over the hoofbook, and see if your behavior is consistent with the philosophy of the site and the rules. Remember that banning outright is a tool to be used sparingly, if at all. Read the user's intentions, see what they're about, and use that ban *sparingly*.

C. Let's Warn!

Instead of banning, we here at Ponyville prefer to warn our users when posts are approaching the line set by the rules. Here's an issue to think about: most of the rulebreaking posts that occur by regular users are on the line issues. These posts might be rulebreaking, and might not be rulebreaking, depending on how one interprets the rules.

Rules, are unfortunately, like lines: you cross the threshold of the rule, or you don't. This is why we here on Ponyville prefer to warn over ban! We'll discuss later our scale of escalating penalties, where you can see a general guideline for how to escalate warnings into bans, and more!

How do we warn? Let's take a look:

Scenario 1 - Inappropriate Image, First Offense

An inappropriate image is posted by a user. The image is mildly fetishistic, and could be against the rules. The user has no record of offenses.

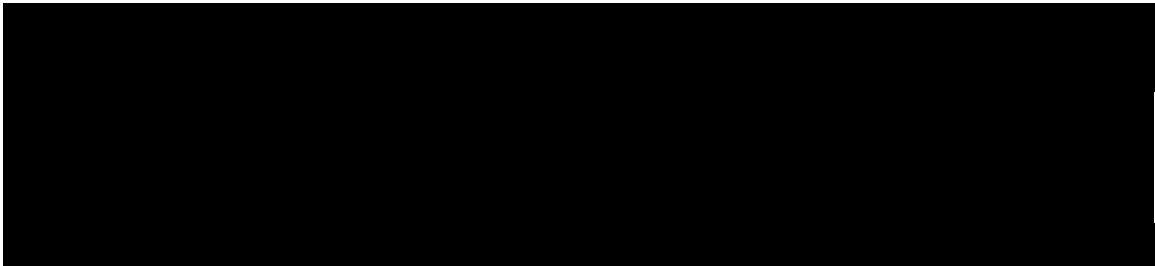Take a moment to complete this exercise, before moving onto the answer. How would you handle this user? For some more practice, what would you say?

A. Warn the user: post in the thread, calling them out, and point directly to the post;
B. Delete the file, and edit the user's post to add a moderator warning;
C. Discuss the situation first with the poster, as it is their first offense, by posting in the thread and issuing a "soft warning" that carries light consequence;
D. Ban the user for a short period of time, such as one second, with a warning attached reminding them that their image is rule-breaking

The answer: ███ - Highlight to view! - ████████

██
██
██
██
██
████████████████████████

████ Did you also try to think about what you'd say, in your response? Let's take a look at an example response:

██
██
██
██
██

Scenario 2 - Inappropriate Image, Second Offense

An inappropriate image is posted by the same user in Scenario 1, after the soft warning was given. The image is mildly fetishistic, and could be against the rules. Although the soft warning was issued, no further action has been taken.
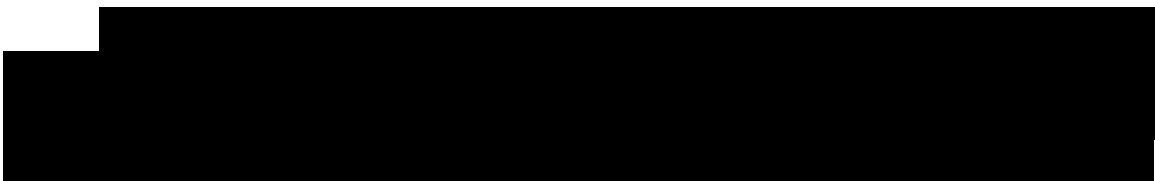
What do you do? For more practice, what do you say?

A. Warn the user: post in the thread, calling them out, and point directly to the post;
B. Delete the file, and edit the user's post to add a moderator warning;
C. Discuss the situation first with the poster, as it is their first offense, by posting in the thread and issuing a "soft warning" that carries light consequence;
D. Ban the user for a short period of time, such as one second, with a warning attached reminding them that their image is rule-breaking

The answer: ██ - Highlight to view! - ████████
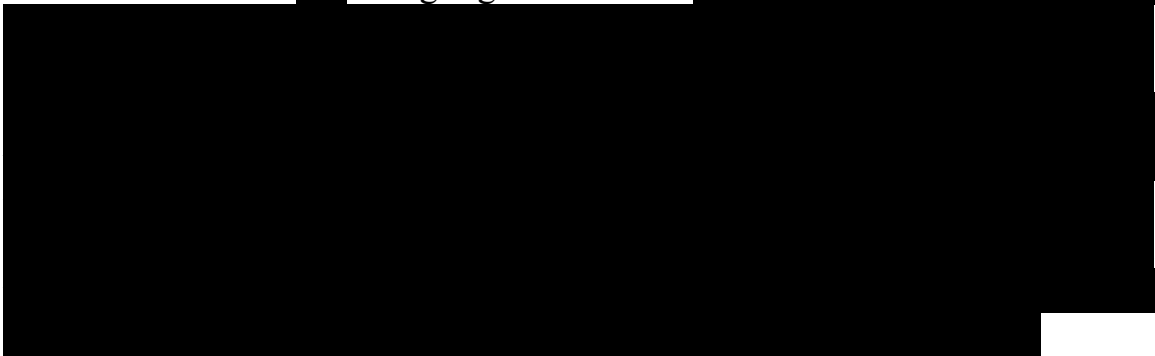
Let's take a look at an example post, below:

<u>Scenario 3</u> - Extremely Inappropriate Image, First Offense

An inappropriate image is posted by a user with no record of offenses. The image is a flagrant violation of the rules, and obviously rulebreaking.
What do you do? For more practice, what do you say?

A. Warn the user: post in the thread, calling them out, and point directly to the post;
B. Delete the file, and edit the user's post to add a moderator warning;
C. Discuss the situation first with the poster, as it is their first offense, by posting in the thread and issuing a "soft warning" that carries light consequence;
D. Ban the user for a short period of time, such as one second, with a warning attached reminding them that their image is rule-breaking

The answer: ███ - Highlight to view! - ████████████████████████

███
███
███
███

███ Let's take a look at an example post:

D. The Moderator's Toolbox

Depending on the circumstances, you may have to pull out one of the tools in your moderator's toolkit to help address an issue or report. These tools, including delete, saging, and locking, can help control situations while you handle them.

Let's say, a post has popped up in the report box. The nifty report-bot has thrown it up on the staff Discord! You click on it, and it pops up, but the report is confusing: you can't make heads or tails of it. You go to check the context, and wow - the thread is five hundred posts long, and this report is located in the center of that thread. *ping!* Another report! This one is from a different user, directed also at a different user, and it's from the same thread: this time at the *bottom* of the thread.

Uh oh. You feel a headache coming on. This is half an hour's worth of reading and thinking! But you've got some tools to help you sort out what is what before you take action.

1. Sage

Preventing a thread full of conflict from constantly breaching the top of the frontpage is a useful way to pull attention away from the thread while you come through it. The community has made clear that locking is not a preferred mechanism of handling long threads: in lieu of this, saging can be a good way of keeping further attention off the thread while you come through it.

2. Lock

   If a thread's unruliness has gotten extremely out of hand: people are throwing insults at each other left and right, or users are at each other's throats, escalating the situation into ban territory, it might be prudent to lock the thread. This also applies if the thread was an against-the-rules subject to begin with! Lock the thread right away, and use the *Move* function to put it in the Rock Farm.

WIP Still to do:
- Communicate with users
- Boards and what they are for, especially Canterlot
- The list of penalties (maybe, this should be last, and easily accessible)

The Rules:

  Why they are what they are

  How to apply these rules fairly, consistently

  Examples

You can't please everyone, your job is not to be popular, your job is to serve

OUTLINE:

I. Handling Reports
 A. Anatomy of Report
  1. Board, which one?
  2. Reason: viable reason? We'll discuss later
  3. Report date and time: try to answer within 3 hours, sooner if urgent
  4. Reported by: always confirm who has reported against who
 B. What are our options?
  1. Delete. Delete all posts by IP (this board only). Delete all posts by IP on all boards (spammers, trolls, advert bots, etc.)
  2. Ban. Ban and Delete
   a) We'll discuss bans later
  3. Sticky
   a) When? User requests, important announcements
  4. Sage

        a) Prevents new posts in a thread from bumping the thread: moving it to the top of the front-page

        b) Threads will autosage after (???)

        c) Sage threads that are being handled for reports

            (1) Upon addressing a report with an in thread post, remember to sage first so it does not bump the thread

5. Lock

        a) Prevents additional non-mod posts in a thread

        b) When to use it? Discussed in section below (CROSS REFERENCE)

6. VIP

        a) Remember Kanthara? VIP gives the user a special tag that identifies them in the thread. Good for, as the tag suggests, special guests!

            (1) Hm… birthday threads? We'll think about it

7. Move

        a) Moves the thread to another board

        b) When to move? Discussed (CROSS REFERENCE)

8. Edit

        a) Can edit a user's posts

        b) Not to be used frivolously

            (1) Issue an in post warning directly to user

            (2) Do NOT edit the content of a user's posts, except to immediately censor something that is better censored than having the entire post deleted

        c) Mods that edit a user's posts for malicious purposes will be removed from their position after the first offense! Not acceptable!

II. When to use what option, how to use each option

    A. Delete, Ban, Ban and Delete, Sage, Lock

    B. Warnings (important)

III. How to communicate with users: public, private, with tag, without tag

IV. Boards and what they are for (Including moving)

V. The Rules

    A. Reviewing the rules

    B. Behavior

    C. Adult Content

        1. Go one by one, tie into penalties, cross-reference

VI.   The list of penalties
        A. Escalating penalties and how they work
        B. Repeat offenses
        C. Bans, permabans, and ban evading

Propositions shall be put to public on September 9th. Hoofbook iterations being prepared, pending ratification.

Scenarios and worksheets section, all the way at the bottom:

When to warn

When to ban

How to warn

In person discussions

Suicide threads

More?

Rough reorg., reword for Prop VII.

Tier 3.

1. Don't go into a thread just to be rude. +
2. Don't derail threads intentionally. When posting in a thread, be respectful of the topic and the atmosphere of the thread. If a thread's OP asks you to stop derailing, please do so.
3. Showing off your ponyart, stories and music is welcome, but please do not engage in site or commercial advertising without first contacting site administration.
4. Have respect for people in general, both those on and off the site.

Tier 2.

Please do not use offensive slurs, unless the language in question is topical and relevant to a non-offensive purpose.

5. Don't shitpost. We define shitpost as: threads that are purposely created to add nothing to the site, regurgitating spamlike content which is low in creativity, and with potential ill intentions that
6. Baiting or Goading
7. Don't be overly hostile in your behavior towards another poster.

Tier 1.

8. Malicious spamming and raiding are strictly disallowed.

9. Doxxing and sharing of others' personal information against their will is disallowed.
10. All content illegal under the law of the United States is expressly and absolutely prohibited on Ponyville.us.
11. Malicious impersonation/sockpuppeting, i.e. discussion manipulating, hurting another's reputation, etc.