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Professional Etiquette

Your academic knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with the meet and greet and the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with a handshake. A firm shake indicates to employers that you're confident and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you're not interested or qualified for the job.

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace...

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. “Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland.” “Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University.”
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining and Eating

Roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. A recruiter remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, the recruiter decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in the “interview” mode and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however, he became more relaxed—and that’s when the candidate’s real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks and spoke negatively about previous employers. The recruiter was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job. Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer.

To make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you...

- Arrive on time.
- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch, so order something easy to eat. Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision; ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason and beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.
- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Dip soup away from you; sip from the side of the spoon.
- Pass salt and pepper together—even if asked for only one.
- Pass all items to the right.
- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don’t chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.



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GENERAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

- Arrive early for work every day.
- Learn people's names and learn them quickly
- Treat everyone with respect regardless of rank.
- Be careful about over sharing personal details.
- Don't gossip.
- Respect other's space. Don't just walk in. Knock or make your presence gently known. Wait until you are invited to sit down.
- Remember that sounds and smells travel.
- Don't listen to music or check your phone in the elevator or when in common areas of the office.
- Always do the right thing, even if no one else is.
- Keep your workspace professional and neat with appropriate personal touches.
- If someone is on the phone, don't interrupt or try to communicate with them verbally or with sign language.
- Limit your personal phone calls.
- Learn the rules of cell phone use in your office.

PHONE ETIQUETTE

- Return phone calls and emails within 24 hrs. Even if only to say that you will provide the requested information later.
- Ask before putting someone on speakerphone.
- Personalize your office voice mail.
- Call during business hours. Don't call when you know someone isn't in the office.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

- Emails should be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Business email should not be treated as personal email.
- Use the subject box and make the purpose of your message clear.
- Don't say anything in an email you wouldn't say to a person's face.
- Underlining, italicizing, bolding, coloring and changing font size can change the tone of your email message.
- Make your emails short and clear.
- Avoid text talk or emoticons.
- Don't overuse the "Reply All" email function and make sure you are sending your email to the correct person before sending it.

MEETING ETIQUETTE

- If a meeting is in someone's office, don't be more than 5 minutes early.
- Don't ever be late for a meeting, conference call, or appointment.
- Do not interrupt others.
- Do not be argumentative or confrontational in a meeting.
- Don't check your phone during meals or meetings.
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