Etiquette Guide

From the Office of Career Development

A RESOURCE GUIDE TO HELP YOU MASTER ETIQUETTE & SOCIAL SITUATIONS
Etiquette Guide

Though most of us think of etiquette as the highly technical rules of formal dining or the correct order of introductions, the right fork to use is not as important as understanding the real point of manners. Etiquette is simply treating others as you would want to be treated, at all times.

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Alcohol
- When you are in a social setting or an after-work setting, it is common for alcohol to be available. It is important to keep this social activity under control.
- While gossiping is also considered rude, you can be sure if you were acting inappropriate at a work happy-hour or network building event, it will tarnish your professional reputation, sometimes permanently.

Bad Language
- This is not appropriate in a business or professional setting.
- Neither are jokes that could be even remotely labeled as offensive or hurtful to anyone.

Cell Phones / Tablets
- It is rude to use your cell phones or tablets around others when you have the opportunity to interact instead. Turn it off or turn the ringer off. Even on vibrate, it is distracting. The message you send to others is that their time and attention is not something you value, and this is not the message that a professional should be reflecting. If there is an emergency and you must take a call or send an email, politely excuse yourself so you may do so.
- Be mindful of background noises if you are taking an important call in a crowded location, as background noises are considered both distracting and a sign to the person on the other end of the conversation that you do not have their full attention.
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Cleaning Up After Yourself

- When you visit an office or attend a conference or meeting, do remember to clean-up after yourself. This includes throwing your plate, cup, etc. in the trash and pushing in your chair.
- Remember, it takes a lot of people to organize events, and showing respect for them by making their job less complicated shows gratitude for their hard work.

Dining

- In most circumstances, the purpose of a business lunch or dinner is to get to know people, to make new business friends. The intent is not to feed you as though you had been starving for months. Please be mindful of this and, knowing your own body, decide in advance whether or not you need a pre-meal snack.
- A good rule of thumb with silverware is to start from the outside and work your way in starting with the first course.
- Never put used silverware on the table. Always place it on the plate.
- Stay clear of messy foods or foods with strong lingering odors.
- You may find that if your company orders alcohol, it is appropriate to order something comparable, if you desire. It is best to set a limit for yourself prior to the meal. If you would rather not consume alcohol and a server is pouring, simply and discreetly waive your hand over the glass. Do not tip your glass upside down.

- Ordering the most expensive thing on the menu in a business or professional setting, whether or not you are paying, is considered rude. Please avoid doing so.
- If you anticipate paying for the meal, it might be a good idea to arrive early and give the waiter or maître d’ your credit card to avoid the “who’s paying” battle at the end of the meal.
- Confused about which bread plate and drink are yours? Remember this handy trick:

  The letter “b” for bread
  The letter “d” for drink

- When you hold your hands in the above position, they form the first-letter for “bread” on the left where you will find your bread plate and “drink” on the right where you will find your glass(es) for beverages.

Email

- If you don’t already have one, please create a professional email address. Nothing says unprofessional like iluvbutterflies444@aol.com.
- The same rules of spelling, punctuation, and grammar apply in an email as would in a letter. Anything less appears either lazy or disrespectful. Make sure you also include a formal sign-off, such as “kindly,” “respectfully,” or “sincerely.”
- Emoticons should never be used in a professional context.
you worry about how your message might be interpreted, consider a face-to-face discussion instead.

- The subject field in an email is a helpful tool and should not be ignored or ineffectively utilized.
- Be careful with “Reply All” or “BCC.” Many people have horrible stories regarding these email tools.
- Never email angry. When in doubt, draft the email (without the person’s email address in the “To:” field to avoid a possible accidental send) and wait until you cool down to see if it is still something you need to say.
- Always use spell-check on your emails. Typos and incorrect spellings reflect poorly on the sender.

**Eye Contact**

- Not having good and appropriate eye-contact could be interpreted as a sign that you are being untruthful, disingenuous, or disengaged.
- Practice good eye contact and seek feedback if this is something you feel you need to work on.

**Forms of Address**

When you are addressing someone in a formal or business setting, use the appropriate standard titles, including:

- Mister (abbreviated “Mr.”) for men.
- Misses (abbreviated “Mrs.”) for married women.
- Miss for unmarried women.
- Ms. (pronounced “miz”) for women when you do not know if they are married.
- Doctor (abbreviated “Dr.”) for individuals with a Ph.D. or M.D.
- Professor (abbreviated “Prof.”) for faculty members.

**Gossip**

Refrain from gossiping, and remember the following adages:

- “Secrets, secrets are not fun. Secrets, secrets hurt someone.”
- “Loose lips sink ships.”

**Gratitude**

- Everyone likes to be appreciated for a job well done.
- Be sure to show your appreciation for someone who helped you last-minute or took the time to assist you.
- Be creative in your recognition.
- Sending a nice note to someone’s supervisor or a hand-written note goes a long way.

**Handshake**

- Handshakes are important.
- Some people view handshakes as a tell-all of a person’s ability to do a job, communicate, and give respect.
- No dead-fish hands. Be sure your handshake is firm but not bone-crushing.
- Look someone in the eye when you shake their hand, smile, and let them know you are glad to meet them.
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- Most ladies, especially your peers, do not appreciate the flimsy semi-grip. If it is a woman who is much more mature than you are, it may be appropriate.

Holiday Cards
- The time around the holidays is always a great opportunity to reconnect with professional contacts and express gratitude.
- Be sure to keep cards neutral if you are not sure if someone recognizes a particular holiday.
- Sending a “Happy New Year” or “Peace” card is a great way to send someone warm thoughts without running the risk of sending the wrong message.

Introductions
- If you are someone who has trouble remembering someone’s name, even 3-seconds after you met them, try to say their name aloud. For example: “Hi, my name is Sally Wonderbee.” “Hi, Sally! It is a pleasure to meet you.” Saying the name aloud tends to help your memory.
- It is always a nice touch to assist others who may be in the same boat with you. When in mixed company, help everyone out by introducing people using their names and giving a bit of background information about them and perhaps a memorable conversation starter. For example: “Mr. Tom Jones, I want you to meet Ms. Cindy Cisco. Ms. Cisco is one of our shareholders at the firm and just returned from a European Cruise. Ms. Cisco, Mr. Jones works in our accounting department and was recently recognized as one of the area’s top CPA’s.” When you are introducing people who are older than you are or are in a position of authority, it is always best to use Mr./Mrs./Ms. and their full name. If you are introducing colleagues or classmates to one another, first names are likely appropriate. When in doubt, be more formal.
- In business settings it is also appropriate to make introductions based on hierarchy. For example, you would introduce an associate to a client and a peer in your own company to a peer in another company.
- Wear your nametag near your right shoulder so when you shake someone’s hand they can easily see your nametag.
- If you are with a buddy or a significant other, ask him/her to assist you as well if you are not great with names. For example, ask your partner to help you out by making the introduction before you have to put yourself in the uncomfortable position of remembering the name of someone you haven’t seen in a while or just met.

Listening
- The art of listening is underrated.
- Listening involves watching others for body language cues, being mindful of your own body language, and being actively involved in the conversation.

Meetings / Presentations
- If you are leading a meeting, be sure it starts and ends on time—everyone’s time is valuable.
- Prepare for your meeting whether you are an attendee or the host. No matter how seasoned you are, you are rarely harmed...
Etiquette Guide (continued)

by preparation. This includes everything from meeting with your boss to talking to a jury.

- Don’t over-invite. Make sure everyone attending has an interest/role in the topic.

Negativity

- People who have a positive outlook (read: not Pollyanna, but positive) are generally pleasant to be around and therefore a more attractive colleague or contact.

Nice

- Be nice to everyone. Everyone. No matter what.

Resigning

- Always be sure to check your company’s handbook for any rules about resignation, and do everything aside from jeopardizing your new job to follow them.
- Prepare (at home) a formal letter of resignation as it will in all likelihood end up in your permanent file with that company. Keep the letter positive, appreciative, and brief. This letter is not a suggestion box or chance to tell the employer how to improve.
- Tie up as many loose ends as possible before you depart to ensure that you are remembered fondly and in the good graces of those who must pick up where you left off.
- Avoid any expressions of anger. You will need to list your boss or co-workers as references down the road.
- If you have an exit interview, keep it positive but offer constructive feedback when appropriate.

RSVP

- When an RSVP (répondez s’il vous plaît, meaning “reply, if you please” or “please answer”) is printed on an invitation, you must promptly contact the host/hostess/coordinator and let him/her know whether you will be attending or not. Correct head counts help the event run smoothly and cost-effectively. Should an invitation say “Regrets only” then you should respond if you are unable to attend.
- Should a last-minute emergency occur and prevent you from attending, notify the appropriate person as soon as possible offering your apologies and a brief explanation, if appropriate. You may also want to consider following up with a handwritten note when things calm down.
- If you are going to be late, let someone know.

Senses

- Be mindful of people’s sensitivities to strong smells. Avoid wearing too much perfume or cologne. One to two sprays will do the trick.
- If you are eating strong-smelling foods, be sure to carry a mint.
- If you smoke, do it outside and away from others. Also, consider washing your hands afterwards and also carrying a breath-freshener. If you are going into an interview, it is best not to smoke before as the smell could turn off the interviewer.
Etiquette Guide (continued)

Sneezing/Coughing
- Germs are bad. Be sure not to spread them by coughing into your “elbow-pit” (picture a vampire) and not into your hands.
- When time allows, excuse yourself to wash your hands.

Tipping
- A standard tip is 15% of the cost of your meal. If you received excellent service, though, you might tip 20%. If service was very slow or bad, you might tip 10%.
- While tipping is found mostly in restaurants, it is also appropriate for other services like getting a haircut, taking a taxi, or having a bellhop deliver your bags to your room.
- If you don’t know if tip is included, it is alright to ask.
- Always strive to carry a few singles with you at all times. You never know when the only parking will be valet.

Telephone
- Whenever you call someone, it is expected that you will introduce yourself. Start with a “Hello,” and then let the person you are speaking to know who is calling. Make sure you ask for the person you are calling to speak to or announce why you are calling. Thus, it could sound like, “Hello, this is Iris O’Brien calling. May I speak to Janet Choi?” Or, it could be something like, “Hello, this is Iris O’Brien. I’m calling to speak with someone about how to login to my email, please.”
- When you answer a call, it’s appropriate to just say “Hello.”
- When calling an individual at home or on their cell phone, it is considered impolite to call before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m. The exceptions would be if it were an emergency or the person invited you to call outside of that time frame.
- When calling a business, anticipate that they will not be there to answer the phones before or after office hours and that you will have to leave a message. Make sure you clearly enunciate your name, number where they can return your call, and purpose for calling when you leave a message. It may be helpful to spell out your name on the message for clarity.
- When calling someone, always confirm they have the time to speak to you. If not, offer to call back or set an appointment.
- Always get someone’s permission before placing them on speakerphone. This is not just the polite thing to do, but could also avoid a legal issue.
- If you are in a conference call, it is polite to introduce all participants including those who are only listening.
- Always ask someone if it is OK to put them on hold. Be sure to wait for a response before doing so.
- Multitasking is great, but try to avoid calling people while you are doing other things. Be sure they have your undivided attention and that you have good reception.
- If someone calls you and leaves a message, it is good practice to return his/her call within 24 hours.

Visiting
- It is very important to be punctual for business meetings and appointments. Your ability to arrive on time or early to appointments reflects well upon you. If you’re running late, please telephone ahead of time to alert them to that.