

Using Proper Etiquette

Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of proper etiquette as it relates to interviewing and business situations.
2. Understand the elements and characteristics of proper etiquette.
3. Become familiar with proper social, telephone, dining, and correspondence etiquette.

What is Etiquette?

Webster defines it as “the forms, manners, and ceremonies established by convention as acceptable or required in social relations, in a profession, or in official life.” Etiquette is respect, good manners, and good behavior as they exist individually, as well as how they collectively impact impressions of a person’s competence.

In the professional world, understanding and possessing etiquette refers to how well individuals both know and apply expectations of appropriate behavior (both spoken and unspoken expectations) in the professional environment. Some business organizations have administrative manuals in which acceptable codes of behavior are listed. For the purposes of this guide, we will focus on five elements of business etiquette: work, social, telephone, dining, and correspondence.

Work Etiquette

The following principles can be utilized by office employees to show proper etiquette as they include all aspects of the work environment.

1. *Be timely.* Arrive to work and meetings on time or early. Complete work assignments on time.
2. *Be polite, pleasant, and courteous.*
3. *Learn office politics.* Utilize effective listening skills to discover appropriate office behavior. Pay attention to the way things are done.
4. *Understand chain of command and demonstrate respect for management.* To help with this, consider these four common expectations:
 - The “boss” is your superior and maintains final judgment and/or approval of work decisions. Employees are expected to defer to the boss or management.

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- Keep management informed. Transparent communication allows you to be sure you are taking the correct actions in your work and are not overstepping boundaries.
 - Observe chain of command and how information is expected to move through the organization. Employees should avoid “going over the head” of a manager without informing them as this can cause both social and professional rifts.
 - Remember that what you do and say reflects upon your manager. Employees are expected to work and behave in such a way that their managers are reflected upon positively.
5. *Appear professional and well-groomed.* Follow expectations for dress in your organization.
 6. *Adopt a can-do attitude.* Those who accept challenges and display creativity are valuable.
 7. *Be flexible.* By remaining flexible and implementing change, you gain a reputation as a cooperative employee.
 8. *Give credit to everyone* who made a contribution to a project or event.
 9. *Treat others how you would like to be treated.* Do not treat co-workers or partners differently based on their position or standing in an organization.

Social Etiquette

Another important part of etiquette includes the ability to appropriately demonstrate social and interpersonal skills. Most organizations require some degree of teamwork and/or networking, so these skills are very important. Verbal and nonverbal behavior help define your social skills when meeting and interacting with people. You can demonstrate proper etiquette by using effective handshakes, maintaining eye contact, and making the appropriate introductions. On the following page are some tips for executing effective social/interpersonal interactions.

Handshakes

- Develop a comfortable handshake and keep it consistent.
- Handshakes should not be too hard or too soft.
- Make a solid connection of the web skin between the thumb and forefinger.
- The host or person with the most authority usually initiates the handshake.

Eye Contact

- Eye contact increases trust and shows confidence and good interpersonal skills.
- Eye contact shows respect for the person and business situation.
- Look others in the eye when speaking, but do not stare! It is okay to blink or look away occasionally.
- Consider cultural expectations of eye contact as it is considered rude in some cultures. Try to know who you will be meeting with and take your eye contact cues from the person you are speaking with in the moment.

Proper Introductions

- Authority usually defines whose name is said first. Say the name of the most “important” person first and then the name of the person being introduced, for example: “Director Johnson, this is Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown, this is our Senior Director, Director Johnson.”
- Introduce people in the following order: younger to older, non-official to official, junior executive to senior executive, colleague to customer.
- Keep the introduction basic.
- Try to remember names for future reference.
- Provide some information about the people you are introducing to clarify your relationship with that person. For example, “Director Johnson, Mr. Brown is our newest market analyst. Mr. Brown, Director Johnson is the Senior Director of our sales division.”
- Always carry business cards and ask for business cards from the people you are meeting.
- After a meeting, create written notes on the people you spoke with in order to follow up, both personally and professionally.

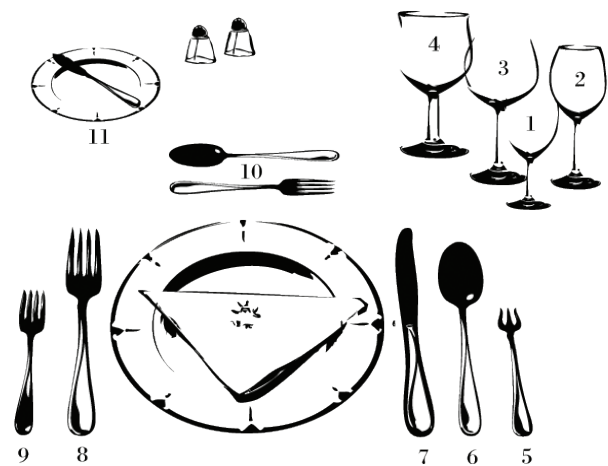
Dining Etiquette

In today’s world, business may be conducted while having a meal. Whether at home or in a restaurant, it is important to have a complete understanding of proper dining behavior expectations. Below are some general guidelines for appropriate meal-time behavior:

- When possible, let the host take the lead.
- Ask for suggestions/recommendations.
- Do not order the most or least expensive menu items.
- Avoid foods that are sloppy or hard to eat.
- Avoid alcohol, even if others are drinking.
- Choose the correct silverware. Knowing the formal table setting allows you to focus on the conversation rather than which utensil to use.

The Basic Table Setting (see figure below):

- Eating utensils are used from the outside in. Dessert forks/spoons are placed at the top of the plate.
- Everything to the right you drink, to the left you eat.
- When you do not know what to do, watch your host and follow his or her example.
- When finished, leave your plate where it is. Do not push it away from you. Lay your fork and knife diagonally across the plate and side-by-side, placing them as if pointing to the numbers 10 and 4 on a clock face. Place the sharp edge of the knife facing you.



The Basic Table Setting

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Sherry glass | 5. Seafood fork | 9. Salad fork |
| 2. White wine glass | 6. Soup spoon | 10. Dessert fork and spoon |
| 3. Red wine glass | 7. Dinner knife | 11. Butter plate |
| 4. Water goblet | 8. Dinner fork | |

Napkin Etiquette:

- Place the napkin in your lap immediately after seated. Do not shake it open. Place the fold of a large napkin toward your waist.
- If you must leave the table during the meal, put the napkin on your chair or to the left of your plate.
- When finished, place the napkin to the right of your plate.

Eat Properly:

- Begin eating only after everyone has been served.
- Bread and rolls should be broken into small pieces. Butter only one or two bites at a time.
- Butter should be taken from the butter dish and placed on the bread plate, not directly on the bread.
- Bring food to your mouth, not your mouth to the food. Chew with your mouth closed. Do not talk with your mouth full.
- Always scoop food away from you.
- Do not leave a spoon in the cup; use the saucer or plate instead.
- Taste your food before seasoning.
- Cut food one piece at a time.
- Always pass to the right. It is acceptable to pass to your immediate left if you are the closest to the item requested.
- Always pass the salt and pepper together.
- Ask the person nearest to what you want to “please pass” the item “after you have used it yourself.”
- Do not smoke while dining out.
- Do not use a toothpick or apply makeup at the table.
- If food spills off your plate, pick it up with your silverware and place it on the edge of your plate.
- Never spit a piece of food into your napkin. Remove the food from your mouth using the same utensil it went in with. Place the offending piece of food on the edge of your plate. Fish bones or seeds may be removed with your fingers.
- Take small bites so you can carry on a conversation without long delays for chewing and swallowing.

Correspondence Etiquette

Whether you have just met someone or have known the person for some time, it is appropriate to follow up meetings and interviews with written correspondence. Below are some tips for appropriate correspondence:

- Write a follow-up/thank you letter in 48 hours.
- Use legible penmanship and proofread for spelling errors.
- Choose quality stationery.

Whether a handwritten note or formal letter, always follow guidelines for writing effective business letters. For more information, see the “Writing Effective Letters” guide in The Career Center or online at career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides.

Email Etiquette

Email is appropriate to use, but never use all caps and watch for typos. Below are some email etiquette tips:

- Always include a subject line in your message.
- Make the subject line meaningful.
- Use correct grammar and spelling.
- Use a signature if you can. Make sure it identifies who you are and includes alternate means of contacting you (phone and fax are useful).
- Be concise and to the point.

Telephone Etiquette

When speaking on the telephone, proper etiquette is just as important as when you meet someone in person. Like face-to-face interactions, how you behave on the telephone can demonstrate your character to others.

- Try to return calls on the same day. If this is not possible, try to respond within 24 hours.
- Keep business conversations to the point.
- Avoid keeping someone on hold for more than 30 seconds.
- If you must leave a message, leave your contact phone number and ask politely for the individual to return your call.
- Listen attentively to the person with whom you are speaking.
- Make sure your voicemail works properly and has an appropriate answering message. An example of a professional answering message may sound like:

"Hello, you have reached Ms. Jones at 555-555-5555. I am unavailable to take your call at present, but if you will leave your name, telephone number, and a brief message, I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."

Proper Use of Cell Phones at Work

When at work, your personal cell phone can have a negative impact on how you are viewed. By following some simple rules of cell phone etiquette, you will maintain your professionalism.

- Turn your cell phone ringer off, or at least to vibrate.
- Do not answer your phone while meeting with someone or take it to a meeting (or turn it off completely). Let calls go to voicemail, unless expected and important.
- Use your personal phone in a private place (not at your desk).
- Inform others when you are expecting a very important call and that you will need to take it prior to any meeting.

Summary

More and more, proper business etiquette is viewed as an important part of making a good impression. These visible signals are essential to your professional success.



Additional Resources

Career Center Library Books

Backpack to Briefcase: Steps to Successful Career..IA A7
Kiss, Bow, Shake Hands: The Bestselling
Guide to Doing Business in More than 60
Countries.....VIC M56
Work 101: Learning the Ropes of the Workplace
Without Hanging Yourself.....IE F7

Other Books

- Brody, Marjorie & Pachter, Barbara. *Business Etiquette*. McGraw Hill Co., 1994.
- Craig, Elizabeth. *Don't Slurp Your Soup: A Basic Guide to Business Etiquette*. New Brighton, Minnesota: Brighton Publication, 1996.
- Dupont, M. Kay. *Business Etiquette and Professionalism*. Crisp Publications, 2000.
- Fox, Sue. *Business Etiquette for Dummies*. Wiley Press, 2008.
- Mitchell, Mary. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Business Etiquette*. Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2004.
- Post, Peggy & Peter. *The Etiquette Advantage In Business: Personal Skills for Professional Success*. Harper Resource, 2005.
- Stewart, Marjabelle Young & Marian Faux. *Executive Etiquette in the New Workplace*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Online Resources

- www.emilypost.com — Dining Etiquette
- emailreplies.com — Email Etiquette
- <https://www.quintcareers.com/phone-interview-etiquette/>
- career.missouri.edu/interviews/dinner-etiquette — Dining Etiquette
- career-advice.monster.com — International Business Etiquette *Search "International Business Etiquette"

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