

Video Transcript

The Five Zones of Professional Etiquette (Student Version) by Bovee and Thill Business Communication Videos

[Music] The five zones of professional etiquette.

Etiquette in today's business environment can be a confusing subject with differing expectations and evolving norms of behavior. This video will help you make positive choices in five distinct areas: in the workplace, online, on the phone, in social settings, and while using mobile devices.

You might be asking yourself if etiquette is worth your time and attention. After all, etiquette sounds a bit fussy, like which fork to use at the dinner table, and maybe even old-fashioned in today's fast-paced business world, however, professional etiquette is really just another way of showing respect, that you respect the people around you and respect the culture in which you work. Poor etiquette is a barrier to successful communication and can undermine business relationships. How others view you as a professional depends to a large degree on your attention to etiquette. No matter how talented or innovative you are the impression you leave behind depends on how well you treat others. No one wants to work with rude or embarrassing people and poor etiquette can destroy the morale of any workplace. Digital devices and constant connectivity can make matters worse by de-personalizing communication. So, etiquette is more important than ever. If you work in a conventional office setting you'll probably spend more time with your colleagues than you spend with friends and family.

Here are a few key tips.

- Respect other people's time, such as showing up for work and meetings on time.
- During meetings and conversations don't interrupt even if you need to correct someone.
- Course language and profanity have become more common on social media but articulate professionals don't need profanity to make a point.
- Dress appropriately and practice good personal hygiene. Office cultures vary from formal to casual, when in doubt dress a little more formally or modestly.
- Respect personal space, knock before entering offices and don't barge into someone's cubicle without being invited.
- Don't gossip, it's a waste of time and often disrespectful to others.
- Be mindful of noise levels particularly in open plan offices.
- Lastly, keep politics and other volatile topics out of the workplace.

When you connect online with colleagues or customers or whenever you represent your company online and social media take care to overcome the limitations and risks of digital media.

- avoid personal attacks
- don't write anything online that you wouldn't say to someone in person
- on social media and an email or other communication don't hijack threads by taking over a conversation someone else started
- to avoid confusion, follow the basic expectations of spelling punctuation and capitalization
- practice safe digital hygiene to avoid infecting your company's systems with malware-- keep virus protection and operating systems up to date and don't click on suspicious links or open files from unknown senders
- don't share inappropriate material whether it's jokes photos or anything else that doesn't belong in the workplace
- finally, remember that digital is forever and anything you write or post can be sent far beyond your original audience and will likely be saved in an archive somewhere

Whether you're talking on a landline or a mobile phone follow these points for more effective communication.

- be conscious of how your voice sounds--remember that your voice has to do the work of the facial expressions, hand gestures and other non-verbal signals you can use while talking in person
- be courteous when you call--ask the other party if this is a good time to talk
- convey a positive professional attitude when you answer the phone, make your callers feel welcome
- use voicemail and unified communication features to help callers--if you never check your voicemail try to deactivate it or at least let callers know not to leave messages and be considerate when you leave voicemail messages by being as brief as possible

From casual lunches with your team to formal dinners with clients you will likely spend some time in public as a representative of your company. The most important point to remember is that you are in fact representing your company in these situations.

- don't say or do anything in public that you wouldn't say or do in the office
- when introducing yourself briefly describe your role in the organization
- when introducing others help them ease into a conversation by sharing a bit of information about one or both parties
- choose foods that are easy to eat, you don't want to be wrestling a lobster while trying to discuss business

- be conscious of the balance between social and business discussion--if others appear to want to have a more social chat don't force the conversation toward business and vice versa
- be careful with alcohol consumption--in general, don't order a drink if senior managers or your customers aren't drinking and always limit how much you drink

Mobile devices present a unique set of etiquette questions. Whether you're using them for voice calls or as computing devices here are some helpful points.

- avoid loud, obnoxious or inappropriate ringtones
- mute your phone in meetings or whenever it will interrupt others
- don't take or make calls where it will disrupt others
- don't take pictures or video without asking permission--some people are hesitant to have their pictures taken and there can be legal ramifications in some settings or situations
- don't use voice input in a way that disrupts others
- don't use your device during meals or when others are talking, although this is accepted behavior for some people others consider it rude
- don't use your device to take notes during meetings unless this is accepted practice in your company--take a cue from managers or senior colleagues

By following these simple guidelines, you can avoid the common blunders that create distractions and hinder working relationships and remember if you're not sure of the rules that might apply in any given situation, observe what others are doing and let respect be your guiding principle.