

PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE TIPS

When presenting yourself in a business setting, it is important that you pay attention to your own verbal and non-verbal cues. The way you communicate, behave, and dress will greatly influence how you project yourself to others. To present yourself in a favourable manner, here are some tips on professional etiquette.

DRESS/APPEARANCE

It takes approximately 7 seconds to make a first impression, so make every second count starting with how you dress, which is the first thing people will notice.

- **Research:** As each industry is different, the best way to know how to dress on the job is to research what other employees are wearing and follow suit.
- **Dress Code:** Become aware of policies related to how to dress in your work place. Remember that as an employee, how you dress reflects not only yourself but an image the company conveys to its clients and customers. For more clothing tips, check out the [Etiquette Tips website](#).
- **Well groomed hair:** Your hair should always look neat and professional.
- **Avoid strong scents:** Be sure to adhere to any policies your office may have related to the use of scents and fragrances. Also avoid having strong odours on your clothes (i.e. smoke or food).

BODY

According to experts, body language represent 55% of our overall communication. With such a high percentage, make sure your body language conveys a positive message.

- **Posture:** Sit up straight or stand tall to convey confidence. Rest arms at your sides or fold your hands. Do not cross arms over your chest as it displays defensiveness and anger.
- **Eye Contact:** Look the person straight in the eye as it conveys interest in others.
- **Facial expressions:** Smile and look pleasant as your facial expressions will always override your words to the person you are speaking with.
- **Personal space:** Respect others' personal space so you do not make them feel uncomfortable. Our North American culture indicates that personal space is generally one to four feet so be sure to allow this space when communicating in professional environments.
- **Handshake:** Your handshake should be firm but not forceful. Shake two to three times from your elbow and release your hand. [Click here for a demonstration](#).
- **Gestures:** Try not to fidget as it may indicate that you are nervous or impatient (i.e. drumming your fingers or playing with your hair).

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a fundamental employability skill as outlined by the [Conference Board of Canada](#). Knowing how to properly communicate orally and in writing is essential to being professional.

- **Written documents:** Any form of written communication (emails, reports, memos, etc.) should always use professional language. Refrain from using any profanity, slang terms, acronyms/text speak when writing documents (i.e. "my bad", "you killed it", LOL, OMG etc.). You want to be seen as mature and professional.

- **Orally:** Use only professional language and pay attention to how you are introduced to someone. For example, if you are introduced to a “Mr. Peterson”, when addressing him, say “Mr. Peterson” rather than using his first name. If you are unsure how to pronounce someone’s name, ask them politely if they could repeat their name for you

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE OFFICE

The use of technology is having a great impact on the workplace. However, it is wise to proceed with caution towards how and when you use technology on the job.

- **Cell phone:** Either keep your personal phone off during business hours or put your phone on vibrate so it does not disturb your colleagues or your customers. If you need to use your phone or make important phone calls, try to do so on your breaks.
- **Email:** Similar to cell phone use, refrain from using personal emails at work.
- **Use of company equipment:** Many workplaces will have a policy on the usage of company phone, computers, etc. Make sure you adhere to the policy.
- **Restricted websites:** Be sure to stay off websites that are restricted, such as Facebook or Twitter. Some companies keep track of what sites have been visited by their employees.

NETWORKING

While meeting new people can be intimidating, being professional is extremely important as you are representing not only yourself but your company too.

- **Networking events:** Using the aforementioned body language tips, introduce yourself to new business contacts. Listen attentively and ask them relevant open ended questions (“What kind of work do you do?” “How long have you been in the field?”). See further tips for networking at events on the Advanced Etiquette website.
- **Quality over quantity:** It’s more important to build a genuine relationship than to collect a high number of business cards. Spend some time getting to know your contact, find something they need help with and follow through in order to build a genuine relationship.
- **Keep in touch:** Ask for your contact’s business card and touch base with them periodically as a way to keep the relationship meaningful.

DINING

Occasionally, you may be asked to attend business meetings centred around a meal. Although it may seem casual, make sure you still appear to be professional.

- **Food choices:** Consider ordering food that is not messy (i.e. avoid soup or pasta) and can be eaten with utensils rather than fingers (i.e. avoid chicken wings).
- **Drinks:** While alcoholic drinks may appear at business functions, you still need to maintain your professionalism. Be aware of your surroundings, don’t be the first person to drink and limit the amount of drinks you consume.
- **Table Manners:** Wait until everyone has received their meal before you start eating, do not speak with your mouth full and be kind to the wait staff.
- **More Dining Tips:** Can be found on the Etiquette Tips website.