

How to Get a Job and Keep It: Workplace Etiquette

Q1: What is the definition of etiquette?

A1: Etiquette is a set of unwritten rules that apply to social situations, professional workplaces, and relationships between people. There are some workplaces where rules are written.

Q2: Thinking about how you treat subordinates, peers, and supervisors, would others see any differences in your relationships between them? If so, how would you assess these differences?

A2: Do a self-assessment, find where the imbalance exists, and then start the process of reworking the relationship dynamics. If left unchecked, these differences could cast an unfavorable light on you.

Q3: First impressions are important when presenting yourself as a professional. What are some ways to form a favorable impression?

A3: Use a person's name three times in your first conversation, write down names, and ask for a business card.

Q4: A little courtesy will help you in the workplace. What steps can you take to ensure others will treat you the same in return?

A4: Respect other people's personal space, keep interruptions to minimum, apologize for interruptions, don't hover over a co-worker when they are on the phone, be helpful and co-operative with co-workers, show appreciation for the slightest courtesies towards you, and always say "Please, Thank You, and You're Welcome, Good Morning, Good Evening, Hello and Goodbye."

Q5: When handling tough situations with co-workers, what are some things to consider while showing respect?

A5: Don't "Sink to someone else's standard", don't be personal in your remarks, take responsibility for your mistakes, be discreet and compassionate in your remarks/comments, and never raise your voice or shout.

Q6: When dealing with criticism from your boss, it's important to look at it as constructive and an opportunity to grow and learn. What approach should you use when taking the criticism?

A6: Recognize the comments and discuss them politely if you disagree. Defer to the boss's opinion if there is no compromise in the disagreement.

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Q7: Proper etiquette is important when communicating via email or phone. What are some things to keep in mind when communicating or corresponding with others?

A7: Return phone calls within 24 hours, ask before putting someone on the speakerphone, use a personalized voice mail, be aware of your personal volume when on a cell phone, respect other people's space while on the phone, and don't check your phone during meals or meetings. Wait until you have finished eating or during breaks if in a meeting.

Q8: In addition to the phone, email is a widely used method of communication. What actions should you take to ensure proper email etiquette?

A8: Respond to email within 24 hours, read and re-read email for grammar and spelling, never use humor or sarcasm, and avoid using all caps, italicizing, bolding, coloring, and changing font size – unless it is needed for intentional emphasis.

Q9: Meetings are another common way we interact with co-workers. When attending a meeting, what actions should be avoided?

A9: Arriving late, not attending at all, leaving the meeting early, checking your cell phone constantly, texting, looking bored, and side conversations with co-workers.

Q10: What are some other meeting behaviors that are not appropriate or rude?

A10: Do not dominate the meeting, never interrupt the speaker, not paying attention, and don't fall asleep.

Q11: As the host of a meeting, what positive behaviors should you demonstrate towards your guests?

A11: Greet your guests at the door or in front of your desk. It's a good idea to place two chairs in front of your desk as a presentation of equals.

Q12: Your workspace should have a positive and professional reflection on you. What are some workplace "housekeeping tips" to keep in mind?

A12: Keep your workspace neat and professional, limit personal phone calls, and keep food consumption to a minimum. If you have any questions, ask your supervisor.

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Q13: When interacting with peers, respect their space. What courtesies should you show others when interacting with them in their office space?

A13: Knock or gently make your presence known, wait until you're invited to be seated, don't interrupt their phone call, avoid communication verbally or using "sign" language (like gesturing a phone call), and never "borrow" other people's desks for lunches without their permission.

Q14: The office kitchen is one of the office common areas, which is an extension of your workspace. Why is it important to keep this area clean and tidy?

A14: Visitors could have an unfavorable impression of you if dirty dishes are left in the sink and insects will find their way into the space, inviting unwanted germs.

Q15: Personal etiquette is important when presenting yourself as a professional. What are some habits that may be annoying to others in the workplace and how should you prevent them?

A15: Chewing gum, body odor, bad breath, too much cologne or perfume, constant coughing or sneezing, and yawning from lack of sleep.

Never chew gum while working with customers, bathe regularly and use a suitable deodorant, ask a trusted co-worker if your perfume or cologne is too strong, use a tissue or sneeze into the bend of your arm and then say "Excuse me", and make sure you get enough rest at night.

Q16: Personal comments about others should be avoided and being the office "know-it-all" is the biggest gripe among coworkers. What are four other traits you should avoid being guilty of in the workplace?

A16: The office "bragger" or "show off", discussing romantic liaisons, discussing salaries, and trying to sell things to your colleagues.

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WRAP UP:

- ⇒ How you present yourself to others in the business world speaks volumes. Learn names and learn them quickly. First impressions occur within the first seven seconds. A good tip for remembering names is to use a person's name three times within your first conversation. The same goes for new employees. Make them feel welcome and comfortable around you. They will appreciate your kindness and may end up being a good ally for you down the road.

- ⇒ You may occasionally find yourself in a tough situation with peers. When handling these situations, it's sensible to consider the following:
 - Don't sink to someone else's standards.
 - Be tactful and do the right thing, even if you're doing it alone.
 - If there is conflict with a coworker, don't get personal in your remarks.
 - If you're wrong, take responsibility for your actions and apologize.
 - Be discreet and compassionate in your criticism towards the other person.
 - Never raise your voice and be careful of your tone when speaking.

- ⇒ Communicating by phone has etiquette guidelines. Always return phone calls within 24 hours, even if you don't have the answer to their question. Before placing a person on a speaker phone, ask the person on the line if it's OK. If you're using a cell phone, be conscious of your volume and respectful of people's space around you.

- ⇒ There are even etiquette guidelines for email! Like phone messages, reply to emails within 24 hours. Make sure to check for grammar and spelling errors. Be careful of font formatting (Using all caps, underlining, bolding, etc.). Doing so could send the wrong message. And before hitting send, re-read your email!

- ⇒ Not to leave out meetings, here are some etiquette tips to be mindful of include:
 - Never arriving late!
 - If you anticipate you will be late or unable to attend, give advanced notice to the meeting organizer.
 - Don't leave the meeting early unless you've given notice to the meeting organizer.
 - Always greet attendees/visitors whether in your office or a meeting space.

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FINAL THOUGHT:

Workplace etiquette is important to efficiency in an organization. Since many modern offices feature open space designs, with cubicles and “bullpens,” the new office landscapes make a difficult situation even more challenging.

If organizations wrote policy handbooks to include every possible rule in the workplace, no one would be able to lift that handbook much less read it through. Always think common sense when it comes to workplace etiquette and remember to always say, “Please,” “Thank you!” and “You’re welcome!”