BUSINESS ETIQUETTE GUIDE

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. It is not just each of these things, but it is all of these things rolled into one.

For the purposes of this guide we will focus on five elements of business behavior: Work Behavior; Meeting People; Telephone Etiquette; Dining Etiquette; and Etiquette for Correspondence.

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

A. Be timely. Arrive to work and meetings on time. Complete work assignments on time.

B. Be polite, pleasant and courteous.

C. Learn office politics – utilize effective listening skills to discover appropriate office behavior. Pay attention to the way things are done.

D. Understand the unwritten rules of business.
   1. Make your supervisor look good. Promotion and opportunities will arise when you help to reach the organization's goals.
   2. Keep your supervisor informed. Good or bad, you don't want the boss to hear information mentioned from an inappropriate source.
   3. Never go over the head supervisors, without telling him/her first.

E. Appear as professional as possible. Being well groomed and clean is essential. Dress for your next job/promotion.

F. Adopt a can–do attitude. Those who accept challenges and display creativity are valuable.
G. Be flexible. By remaining flexible and implementing change you gain a reputation as a cooperative employee.

II. Meeting People
When meeting people both your nonverbal and verbal behavior help to define your social skills. Using effective handshakes, good eye contact, and making the proper introductions show proper etiquette.

A. Handshakes are vital in social situations.
   1. Develop a comfortable handshake and keep it consistent.
   2. Handshakes should not be too hard or too soft.
   3. Make a solid connection of the web skin between the thumb and forefinger.
   4. The host or person with the most authority usually initiates the handshake.

B. Eye contact is another critical factor when meeting people.
   1. Eye contact increases trust.
   2. It shows confidence and good interpersonal skills.
   3. Eye contact shows respect for the person and business situation.

C. Proper introductions help to establish rapport.
   1. Authority defines whose name is said first. Say the name of the most important person first and then the name of the person being introduced.
   2. Introduce people in the following order: Younger to older, non–official to official, junior executive to senior executive, colleague to customer.
   3. Keep the introduction basic.
   5. Provide some information about the people you are introducing to clarify your relationship with that person.
III. Telephone Etiquette
When speaking on the telephone, proper etiquette is just as important as when you meet someone in person.

A. How you conduct yourself on the telephone tells others as much about you as face-to-face interactions.

B. Always try to return your calls on the same day.

C. Keep business conversations to the point.

D. Do not keep someone on hold more than 30 seconds.

E. Always leave your phone number if you ask for someone to call you back.

F. Maintain a phone log to refer back to for valuable information.

G. Listening is essential whether in person or on the phone.

IV. Dining Etiquette
In today's business world, a tremendous amount of business is conducted at a dinner table. Whether at home or in a restaurant, it is important to have a complete understanding of how to conduct yourself when entertaining or being entertained.

Anxiety while dining can be reduced by following guidelines on how to order your meal, what utensils to use and how to use them, and knowing proper table etiquette.

A. Knowing guidelines on what to order will help relieve dining anxiety.

1. When possible let the host take the lead.

2. Ask for suggestions/recommendations.

3. Do not order the most expensive or the least expensive item on the menu.

4. Avoid foods that are sloppy or hard to eat.

5. Avoid alcohol even if others are drinking.

B. Choosing the correct silverware is not as difficult as it may first appear. Knowledge of a formal table setting will allow you to focus on the conversation rather than what utensil to use.
1. Basic table setting:

2. Eating utensils are used from the outside in. Dessert forks/spoons are placed at the top of the plate.

3. Everything to your right you drink. Everything to your left you eat.

4. When you don’t know what utensil to use, watch your host and follow suit.

5. When you have finished, leave your plate where it is in the place setting. Do not push your plate away from you. Lay your fork and knife diagonally across your plate and side-by-side. The knife and fork should be placed as if they are pointing to the numbers 10 and 4 on a clock face.

C. Proper table manners will increase your confidence and promote your ability to show your skills in handling social situations.
1. Napkin Etiquette
   a. Place the napkin in your lap immediately after the last person has been seated at your table.
   b. Do not shake it open.
   c. If the napkin is large put the fold toward your waist.
   d. If you must leave the table during the meal be sure to put the napkin on your chair.
   e. When you are finished eating, place the napkin to the right of the plate.

2. Passing the Food
   a. Always pass to the right.
   b. It is okay to pass to your immediate left if you are the closest to the item requested.
   c. Always pass the salt and pepper together.
   d. Ask the person nearest to what you want "to please pass the item after they have used it themselves."

3. Eating
   a. Begin eating only after everyone has been served.
   b. 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.
   c. Bring food to your mouth, not your mouth to the food.
   d. Chew with your mouth closed.
   e. Always scoop food away from you.
   f. Do not leave a spoon in the cup, use the saucer or plate instead.
   g. Taste before seasoning.
h. Cut food one piece at a time.

i. Do not smoke while dining out.

j. Do not use a toothpick, or apply makeup at the table.

k. If food spills off your plate, you may pick it up with a piece of your silverware and place it on the edge of your plate.

l. 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.

m. Do not talk with your mouth full.

n. Take small bites so you can carry on a conversation without the delay of chewing and swallowing large amounts of food.

V. Correspondence Etiquette
Whether you have just met someone, or have known the person for some time, it is important to follow-up meetings with written correspondence.

A. Write a follow-up letter/thank you note within 48 hours.

1. Whether a handwritten note or formal letter always follow guidelines for writing effective business letters.

   a. Women should be addressed as "Ms." no matter what their marital status.

   b. Do not forget to sign your letter.

   c. Always proof for typos and mis-spellings.

2. Letters usually contain the following elements:

   a. Opener – the opener should be friendly and tells the reader why you are writing.

   b. Justification – the second paragraph reinforces or justifies what you are looking for and why you should get it.

   c. Closing – close the letter by seeking the person to act on your behalf or request.
B. Email etiquette, although new, has some specific guidelines.

1. Email is appropriate to use, but never use all caps and watch for typos.

2. Always include a subject line in your message.

3. Make the subject line meaningful.

4. Use correct grammar and spelling.

5. Always 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).

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.