

Business etiquette is simply about building relationships in the professional world. It provides you with guidelines for handling a variety of situations so you are able to act with grace and confidence. By understanding a few simple principles, you will develop the ability to put others at ease and let your personality shine through.

Job Search

Basics

- Obtain a professional e-mail address that you can use during the job search process—your first name and last name work much better as an e-mail address than rockerdude@gmail.com
- Make it easy to reach you by phone and record a professional-sounding message that includes your name and/or phone number

Networking

- Build relationships with people long before you may need a favor and try to offer help in return
- Respect the opinions and time of others
- Stay in touch with contacts by meeting for coffee, e-mailing articles of interest, or sending cards when appropriate (holiday, birthday, congratulatory, get-well, etc.)
- Send thank you notes to all who help you along the way to share the news of your new internship or job and offer future assistance to the helpers

References

- As you are beginning your internship or job search, start thinking about who knows you well academically or professionally and would be able to say positive things about you to an employer
- Ask the potential reference if they would be willing to be a reference for you during your job search; if they agree, send a thank-you note and include a current resume so the reference will be able to speak to your specific strengths and abilities
- Whenever you provide an employer with your reference list, update references about the position for which you are being considered
- After you are hired, write a second thank you note to your references thanking them for assisting you and to offer to return the favor in the future

Interviewing

- Don't be late—nothing says, "I don't care about your time" more than being late
- Smile, speak clearly, and look people in the eye
- Be prepared—research the company, know yourself, and practice, practice, practice
- Dress appropriately (see our Dress for Success handout for more detailed information)
- Thank all involved; once at the end of the interview and again with a note

At the Workplace

Co-workers

- Treat all with courtesy and respect; this means, avoiding office gossip, rumor spreading, and jokes at others' expense
- Take responsibility for mistakes, apologize, and present a solution
- Don't make disagreements personal—focus on the situation (not the person) and be open to compromise
- Engage in small-talk when appropriate to foster office relationships, but keep it light and be inclusive of all

Supervisors

- Just as you should treat co-workers with respect, you should also show your supervisor the same courtesy
- Work to get the most out of your relationship with your boss; offer ideas, be prepared, be a team player, and accept decisions
- Never undermine your boss—it will reflect poorly on you, making you appear ruthless and deceitful

- Express dissatisfaction after you have taken time to determine if the complaint is worth mentioning and with mindfulness to the timing and approach of your delivery
- Receive constructive criticism with an open mind and use it to learn and grow
- When discussing a promotion with your supervisor, highlight what you could bring to the job, know the market for your skills, and never mention personal issues in your discussion

Workspace

- Respect the privacy of others both in their space and in community areas
- Keep noise to a minimum; limit use of speakerphones, keep personal music low, don't shout between workspaces, and be aware of the level of your voice
- Respect personal space—stand at least 18 inches from someone when conversing and knock when requesting entrance to a cubicle or an office
- Take care of communal property (copiers, fax machines, kitchen equipment); fix what you are able to fix or alert the person in charge of such duties when necessary and always tidy up after yourself
- Don't eat other people's food or "borrow" small amounts of condiments

Meetings

- Know the purpose of the meeting, prepare, and participate
- Avoid interruptions by being on time and silencing electronics; do not contribute to irrelevant tangents
- Make note of action items assigned to you and, shortly after the meeting, plan how you will complete tasks

Communication

In-person

- Be mindful of your volume, tone, speed, and enunciation
- Choose your words carefully and avoid using um, like, you know, etc.
- Listen carefully and observe body language; don't let your mind wander and look at the person speaking
- Use questions to clarify meaning to avoid misunderstandings
- When being introduced to someone, stand up, smile and make eye contact, greet the person, and shake their hand; when you introduce two people, state their names and provide a little information about each

Telephone

- Smile when you speak on the phone—it will make you sound more pleasant
- When placing a phone call, make a few notes about what you would like to speak about and take notes during your conversation
- Every time you make a call, announce your first and last name and where you are calling from unless you are very familiar with the recipient of the call
- Explain the purpose of your call and ask the person if they have time to talk; if the person is busy, ask when would be a good time to call again
- When answering the phone, state the company or department you work in, your name, and end with a question of how you may help (for example, "Accounting Department, this is Mary Brown—how may I help you?")
- Record a voicemail greeting that includes your name, company, and request for callers to leave a message
- When leaving a message for someone, state your name and number first, leave a *brief* message about the purpose of your call, and, finally, repeat your name and number again

E-mail

- Remember that e-mail is not private; do not send confidential information electronically
- The more serious the message you need to communicate, the less appropriate e-mail is as a medium
- Don't forget the basics—begin messages with a salutation (Dear ____), end messages with a valediction (Best wishes), and make sure your message is free of misspellings, grammatical errors, punctuation mistakes, and typos

For additional information, please see our Dress for Success, and Dining Etiquette handouts.