



Office Etiquette Tips

Workplace Etiquette: The Don'ts

Let's face it: There are certain actions and behaviors you just shouldn't bring with you into a professional workplace. Doing so can have major negative impacts on your career. But for many individuals, proper workplace etiquette does not come as intuitively as you might think. Below are some of the biggest don'ts of office life.

1. Don't "Reply All" to an email chain.

Understand the differences—and repercussions—between hitting "Reply" and "Reply All" when responding to an email. Carefully consider whether or not all of the parties who received the initial email need to be included in your reply. Additionally, by "replying all," you may find yourself embarrassed as your entire organization reads details that were only meant to be shared with one or two others.

When in doubt, always do your part to keep emails and other correspondences friendly and professional. As a general rule, treat your emails as a professional form of communication, and make sure that the information you share is appropriate for the time, place, and people involved.

2. Don't have personal conversations at your desk.

If you must have a private or personal phone conversation when you're at work, try not to have the conversation at your desk where others can hear you. Many workplaces have conference rooms that you can use for phone calls; otherwise, it might be a good idea to step outside.

Having a personal conversation at your desk can be distracting to the coworkers near you, and may open you up to gossip about being someone who "can't leave their personal life at home"—which isn't good for your professional image.



3. Don't bring your emotions into the office.

It's best to leave your personal emotions at the door when you get to work. Your desk neighbor doesn't want to hear your sob story from over the weekend. If you truly can't focus on your work because something has happened, it's probably a better idea to take some personal time to process your emotions. Or, if something in the workplace is bothering you, reach out to the human resources department or your supervisor to resolve the issue so it doesn't interfere with your work.

4. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Asking questions—no matter how silly they may seem—will help you clarify expectations and avoid erroneously completing an entire project only to realize you did it all wrong. There's little worse than overconfidence—especially if it isn't actually backed up by experience or skill.

So go ahead and ask your questions, and be sure to truly listen to the answer.

5. Don't gossip about fellow coworkers...or your boss.

Gossiping is one of the cardinal sins of office work: Just don't do it. Whether you're tempted to gossip about your boss, co-worker, or the company as a whole, you're not hurting anyone but yourself when you do.

Gossiping can portray you as someone who can't be trusted or someone who isn't a team player, which won't help you reach your professional goals. It can also be doubly harmful if it gets back to the target of the gossip.

6. Don't use emojis or multiple exclamation points (if any) in work emails.

Disclaimer: This bit of advice will depend on the specifics of your workplace. Some workplaces may embrace emojis and relaxed conversation; others may expect a level of formality at all times. Regardless, be cognizant and intentional when crafting your communications. Work emails don't need to be all serious all the time, but you'll want to maintain a sense of professionalism so that others see you as the competent expert that you are.

When in doubt, always communicate professionally in your workplace emails, regardless of how relaxed your superiors might seem. After you've spent some time on the job, you'll have a better idea of what is deemed appropriate in your workplace.



7. Don't talk back to your boss.

This bit of advice should probably go without saying, but it's an important one nonetheless. Even if there isn't much of an age difference between you and your boss, you should *never* talk back to them. Always show your boss respect, and do your part to not be sarcastic or glib.

This is not to say you can't disagree with them about aspects of the job, a project, or the company's strategy. You should always feel free to share thoughts or concerns if you've got them. But the way that you do this matters.

Hopefully, you will have the chance to climb the career ladder someday. You will want to have your boss in your corner to help you get there.

8. Don't forget that at work socials, you're still at work.

Company outings can be a great chance to socialize with your coworkers and get to know them outside of their 8 to 5 personas. But it's important not to forget that, while you should be yourself, you're still among office mates who you'll be working side-by-side with tomorrow.

9. Don't be nervous, but also don't overstep your boundaries.

In the workplace, you'll often find yourself walking a fine line in how you present yourself. You want to be respectful, but you don't want to come across as being stuffy; you want to appear confident, but you don't want to overstep your bounds; you want to express your opinions, but you need to keep them G-rated.

Learning the balance will take trial and error on your part, but it's an important balance to learn.

10. Don't forget an umbrella.

This one might sound silly, but it's important to be prepared for all of life's annoyances, even at work. Sitting in wet clothes all day is not fun. Walking around with a coffee-stained shirt because your coffee lid popped off is not fun. Talking to someone with spinach stuck between your teeth from lunch is not fun.

Keeping an umbrella, spare pair of shoes, dental floss, and even a change of shirt in your desk (or the trunk of your car) for emergencies can be smart.