

EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE

HOW TO NAVIGATE 101
COMMON AND UNCOMMON
SOCIAL SITUATIONS

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*Everyday
Etiquette*

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Test Your Etiquette IQ

1. The proper place to wear a name tag?

- A. On the left shoulder.
- B. On the right shoulder.
- C. On the left side near your waist.

2. When using one of the six global handshakes, which one is the best choice?

- A. The limp fish.
- B. The web-to-web, two to three pumps.
- C. The double handshake, four to five pumps.

3. In the business arena

- A. Only women stand for introductions and handshakes.
- B. Only men stand for introductions and handshakes.
- C. Both women and men stand for introductions and handshakes.

4. Successful mingling at networking situations dictates that you

- A. Go straight to the bar and buffet.
- B. Stand tall and proud in the middle of the room and hope people introduce themselves.
- C. Introduce yourself to one person or a group of three or more people.

5. When inviting guests to lunch, is it proper protocol to ask where they would like to eat?

- A. Giving them the choice shows respect and also insures that they will enjoy the meal.
- B. It puts too much pressure on the guests for them to decide how formal or informal.
- C. You are the host; you choose a restaurant that you know and trust.

6. When male and female business colleagues arrive at a door, who opens the door?

- A. The woman waits for the man to open the door.
- B. The man waits for the woman to open the door.
- C. Whoever is closest or arrives first opens the door.

7. The easiest way to help your child make confident eye contact is to

- A. Bribe them with candy.
- B. Have them look for the color of people's eyes as they say hello.
- C. Have them wear sunglasses so it isn't so intimidating.

8. Is it acceptable to reply to voice-mail messages with an e-mail or a text?

- A. If you prefer texting, then it is okay to respond to a voice mail with a text.
- B. If e-mailing will be faster and easier, then sending an e-mail is fine.
- C. The best option in replying is to follow the form of communication that the sender initiated.

9. In social and business networking situations, it is important to stand straight because, when you lean, you lose

- A. 50 percent of your credibility.
- B. 10 percent of your credibility.
- C. 90 percent of your credibility.

10. Soft social skills are

- A. How loud or soft we talk.
- B. Personal conduct codes that convey successful, professional, trustworthy, and corporate traits.

C. When we wink or wave or give the thumbs-up sign.

11. We make a first and lasting impression within

- A. The first thirty seconds of meeting someone.
- B. One to three seconds of meeting someone.
- C. Five to seven seconds of meeting someone.

12. If you are invited to a dinner party, the best gift to take to the host is

- A. A music CD or picture frame.
- B. Flowers or wine.
- C. Coasters or chocolates.

13. If your family is invited to a friend's house, is it okay to take your dog along?

- A. No, as people might be allergic.
- B. Yes, your pet is part of the family.
- C. Only if it is a special holiday.

14. When attending a tennis match, is it okay to scream and cheer?

- A. Yes, if it's for your favorite player.
- B. No, you only scream and cheer at the end.
- C. No, loud noises distract the concentration of the players.

15. If invited to a private box at a sporting event, you

- A. Take the best seat in the suite; after all, you are the guest.
- B. Ask the hosts where they would like you to sit.
- C. Invite all your friends to the private suite.

ANSWERS

1. B 2. B 3. C 4. C 5. B & C 6. C 7. B 8. C 9. C 10. B 11. C 12. A & C 13. A 14. C 15. B

INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty years, I have helped people feel more confident and at ease in their everyday lives by teaching them about etiquette, protocol, and soft social skills. Whether I'm doing one-on-one coaching or group classes, writing blogs, visiting the White House, or appearing in my national syndicated "Manners Minute" television segments, I always focus on the same core principles: kindness as opposed to formality, and relationships as opposed to rules.

I grew up in the small mill town of Bessemer City, North Carolina. I was a tomboy who spent most of my childhood climbing trees, outrunning the boys, and usually covered in mud. Despite the rambunctious addictions, I found myself enchanted by the Southern graces taught to me by the female matriarchs in my family and community.

Bessemer City certainly wasn't Charleston or Savannah. It wasn't even Charlotte, which was about an hour to the east of us, but seemed like a world away.

I can remember one spring day when, perched on the branch of a tall pine tree, slingshot in hand, I was stopped in my tracks at the sight of my mother down below in the driveway in a beautiful flowing gown getting into the car with my dad as they headed to the Annual Heart Ball in Charlotte.

Not long after that vision, I retired my BB gun, borrowed my grandmother's tea set, and started hosting tea parties for the neighborhood kids and their pets. The funny part was, because of a shortage of young girls on East Tennessee Avenue back in the seventies, my party guests usually consisted of the boys in the surrounding houses attending against their will in fear that I'd beat them up if they didn't come!

Yearning for art, music, and culture, I headed for college in Florida the fall after graduating high school. A few years later I was spending summers in Europe while earning college credit. I was a sponge for all the glorious gifts I would discover and the unforgettable people I would meet from all different cultures and backgrounds.

Observing scholars and dropouts, rich and poor, famous painters and starving artists, I witnessed how social skills played such an important role in life and how they propelled some to great success while others were held back by the lack of them.

I hope this book helps propel you to great success, by being the very best that you can be.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

What I Learned in the White House

In the late nineties, my husband and I were fortunate to be invited to the White House for a special event in the Oval Office. With fewer than one hundred guests, it was an annual celebration for Italian Americans and featured many famous actors, singers, writers, sports figures, and politicians. As I gazed around the ornate room and explored its vintage artwork and décor, I knew the historic mansion offered so much more to explore.

I walked over to the security woman who had checked us in earlier. I was about to ask her a question when she said, “Ma’am, I want to thank you because you are the only person who spoke to me and asked me how my night was going when you were checking you in for the party.” I thought, *I’ve got to say something funny*, so I said, in my best Southern drawl, “I’m tired of being in there with all those stuffy people [not really]. Is there anything else you can show this girl from Bessemer City, North Carolina, that’s interesting and historical?” She immediately smiled, ripped the walkie-talkie from her belt, and said into it, “I’m bringing a guest with me to the such-and-such room.”

We ventured down several long corridors until we ended up in a large, beautiful office, a magnificent space. My eyes immediately fell upon the large wooden desk that anchored the room. I had seen this wonderful image in so many photographs through the years. Little John-John Kennedy had hid under and peeked out of this desk in his father’s office. I asked the security guard if I could please just touch it. The guard leaned toward me and whispered, “You wanna see something real cool?” She opened the drawer of the desk and pointed out a crude hole about four inches across. It looked as if it had been drilled out with a dull screwdriver blade. Historians believe this hole housed the concealed tape recorder during some Watergate conversations; not very high-tech. It gave me chills. I asked the guard if I could go back and get my husband. I didn’t want him to miss a chance to see this piece of history. As we walked back to the party to get him, I realized that the *simple* act of being kind and acknowledging another human being had granted me favor in the White House.

It’s so important to address and respect other people in each and every situation. Other people matter. That’s the lesson I learned in the hallowed halls of the White House.

Have you ever been introduced to someone who wouldn’t look you in the eye? Or someone who shook your hand as if you had some sort of contagious disease? When you walked away from those encounters, how did you feel?

If you didn’t feel good, you’re not alone.

People want to feel that they matter. They want to be known, respected, and remembered. The better you are at making people feel that way, the more likely you are to make a good first impression.

Making people feel acknowledged is not a gift that you have to be born with. It’s a skill that can be learned. You don’t have to be an extrovert or even a people person to make a favorable first impression. Just review the simple techniques described in this chapter and practice using them as often as you can. Eventually they will become second nature and will easily be incorporated into your everyday life and interactions.

Just a few small changes in how you act can make a big difference.

THE APPROACH

When you’re approaching someone to introduce yourself, walk up, extend your right hand, look the person in the eye, and say, “Hello, I’m ____.” It’s that simple.

Extending your hand first demonstrates self-confidence and openness, traits that make you seem both likable and competent. Technically, when it comes to workplace introductions, the higher-up should be the first to extend his or her hand. As a practical matter, however, you shouldn't wait too long. If the other person (even the company CEO!) doesn't take the lead, just get your hand out there to avoid an awkward pause. Maybe even the CEO needs a lesson in etiquette!

PROPER INTRODUCTIONS

Making a proper introduction helps enhance your business sense and can boost your self-confidence. It also demonstrates your insight and respect for others. Remember the old saying: "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression."

Here are some guidelines to follow for a poised and professional image when making introductions:

- ◆ Introduce people in business according to rank, not gender or age. Example: "Dr. Mollie Martin, I would like you to meet Dr. Tom Hanson."
- ◆ Be sure to look at the people you are introducing, starting with the person of greatest importance.
- ◆ Clearly state each person's name to demonstrate professionalism and credibility. Try to provide a bit of information along with their names, as this can serve as a conversation starter.
- ◆ If introducing people of equal rank, start with the older person.
- ◆ In business, the client, guest, or visitor outranks the boss or coworker and should be introduced first.
- ◆ When introducing someone to a family member, you should typically say the other person's name first.
- ◆ In a social situation, men are generally introduced to women. Example: "Melissa, I'd like to introduce Bobby."

BODY LANGUAGE

With communication in person, body language is even more important than your words. The way you walk, stand, and move tells people a lot about you, whether you're aware of it or not. Every thought and feeling you have about yourself is telegraphed in your body language.

Think about the last party or networking event you attended. How did you decide whom to approach? What helped you figure out whether a particular person was someone you wanted to meet?

Chances are, you observed people's movements, their gestures, and their posture—all of those nonverbal cues we rely on to help us make quick decisions in social situations. At the same time, other people were making similar observations about you. What do you think your body language was telling them?

Here are six simple things you can do to convey both self-confidence and respect for others without saying a word.

- ◆ Stand up straight. When introducing yourself, stand up straight with your shoulders facing the other person. Standing tall and proud sends the message that you are confident, trustworthy, and vibrant, whereas slouching indicates that you're unsure of yourself and uncomfortable with your surroundings.
- ◆ Don't lean on anything. When you lean, you lose 90 percent of your credibility.
- ◆ Place your feet about six to eight inches apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other. This

will naturally improve your posture and make you feel steadier on your feet. Your toes should be facing the other person to avoid sending a silent signal that you want to get away. (Be aware that when you are speaking with someone and their torso and feet are not facing you, it usually means they want to get away.)

- ◆ Stand approximately three feet away from whomever you're speaking with. If you stand too close, you're invading the other person's personal space (remember the "Close Talker" on *Seinfeld*?). On the other hand, if you stand too far away, you may make the other person feel as though you don't really want to be near them.
- ◆ Make eye contact. It shows that you respect yourself and the other person, that you're giving your full attention to the person in front of you. If you're shy or have trouble making eye contact, try to focus on the color of the other person's eyes. If it helps you, pretend that it's your job to find out their eye color. You can also try looking at the person's forehead, right between their eyes.
- ◆ Smile! A smile is contagious and will immediately put the other person at ease. Be careful not to overdo smiling in a professional setting, however, since you don't want to be perceived as frivolous or unintelligent.
- ◆ Don't look over another person's shoulder or around the room. This will make you look easily distracted, or make the other person feel that you are not interested in what they are saying.

WHAT TO SAY

When introducing yourself in a business arena, always state your first and last name along with your title, remembering to say the client's name first. Example: "Hello, Ms. Goodwin. I'm Kelli Hadfield, national VP of sales and training."

THE HANDSHAKE

A handshake is the only physical contact you're likely to have with someone you've just met, so it's important to get it right. Fortunately, a good handshake isn't complicated.



The correct way to initiate a handshake is to extend your right arm toward the other person with your right thumb pointing up.

Your hands should connect “web to web” (the web is the portion of your hand between your thumb and forefinger).

The connection should be snug, but not uncomfortable, and should be followed by three up-and-down pumps. If the handshake goes beyond three pumps, let the other person end the shake when they want to. As long as the other person is still pumping, it’s important not to yank your hand away even if the other person’s hand is sweaty. Pulling your hand away before the other person is ready will come across as a rejection, and nobody likes to feel rejected.

If you try to initiate a handshake, but the other person doesn’t respond, don’t worry about it. Stay relaxed, lower your hand, maintain eye contact, and continue talking.

Never shake hands while in a seated or subservient position. Stand up, then shake hands; this applies to women as well. If a barrier is between you and the other person, such as a desk or table, they should come around from behind the barrier for the handshake, never lean across it.

Although a good handshake is simple, you can easily make a small mistake that conveys a bad impression. Here are a few types of handshakes you should avoid at all costs.

- ◆ The *limp fish*. This is when your hand is limp and feels to the other person as if it has no bones (not a good feeling). Rather than grasping the other person’s hand, you’re making him or her do all the work. This type of handshake says to the other person, “I’m weak; I don’t believe in myself; I’m not a winner.” To avoid a limp fish handshake, grasp the other person’s hand firmly and maintain a snug connection. If someone gives you a limp fish, try to push your hand in a little closer to get a better connection.

- ◆ The *bone crusher*. The bone crusher is the opposite of the limp fish handshake. It’s when you squeeze the other person’s hand so firmly that it causes pain or discomfort. This type of handshake tells people that you’re anxious and need to dominate others to feel powerful.

- ◆ The *queen’s shake*. This is when you hold on to someone’s fingertips, instead of making palm-to-palm contact. This type of handshake makes other people feel that you don’t want to touch them and conveys an “I’m better than you” attitude.

- ◆ The *wrestler*. The wrestler handshake is when you turn the other person’s hand over so that your hand is on top. It is an aggressive and blatant show of power. If someone uses a wrestler shake with you, correct it by taking a two-inch step to the left while gradually returning your hand to a vertical position. This will help restore the balance of power.

- ◆ The *double handshake*. This is when you use two hands. Your right hand grasps the other person’s as in a correct handshake, but your left hand is placed on top of theirs. This handshake should only be used in intimate situations, such as to convey condolences. It tells the other person that you’re feeling for them, but if used in the wrong situation, it feels insincere and inappropriate.

- ◆ The *fist bump*. This is technically a handshake substitute rather than a type of handshake, but President Barack Obama’s use of it has made it acceptable in certain situations. It is most appropriate when used by close friends as a celebratory or congratulatory gesture, so don’t try it at your next board meeting, unless the CEO initiates it.

Some germaphobes have begun using the fist bump to avoid handshakes; they believe it to be more sanitary. Since you never know if this is what’s going on, if someone initiates a fist bump with you, just go along with it. However, since it is still not generally accepted as an appropriate substitute for a handshake, I recommend against initiating a fist bump in most situations.

One last little tip: if you tend to have sweaty hands, use cornstarch or powder or spray antiperspirant on your hands before social events. This will help keep your palms dry so you can shake hands with confidence.

Also, modern etiquette dictates that in social situations a man or a woman can initiate a handshake. It is no longer customary for an elderly woman to initiate a handshake with a younger woman or gentleman with a lady. Be mindful, with elderly men or women, it might be wise to pause and let them reach out, as they may have arthritis.

In business, the higher-ranked person should extend their hand, but if they don't, it is wise to go ahead and initiate the handshake.

COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE

The Lost Opportunity

I was visiting a Fortune 500 hiring manager whose office was spotless and decorated in clean, minimalist modern motifs. He was impeccably dressed, all the way down to his bow tie, and his speech and grammar matched his title, dress, and office décor. He was conducting a series of interviews that I was sitting in on as an observer.

In between the interviews, the manager made phone calls to invite other candidates to come in and interview in person. I asked why he was making the calls rather than someone in his personnel department. He replied that you can tell a lot about a person by the way they start, continue, and end a phone call. He put his phone on speaker and dialed a number from one of the résumés on his desk. After the second ring, a loud, booming, techno-funk beat blared out. After about ten seconds of this ear-bleeding mess a man's screaming voice came on the recorder and said, "What's up?" The hiring manager paused, hung up the phone, and without missing a beat said, "The unemployment line."

It's important that all levels of your communication present a professional persona. That candidate's résumé looked amazing: he had graduated with honors from an Ivy League school and had interned at a prestigious Fortune 500 company. Two words accompanied by a loud techno-beat blast on his voice mail ruined his chance at a near-impossible-to-land job interview. Make sure all personal written and audio information, as well as that shared on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, is professional.

Confidence is fueled by knowledge. When you know how to do something correctly, you feel much more confident doing it. When you feel confident, people feel more comfortable around you, and your communication becomes a lot easier. That's why this chapter is so important, especially if you often feel awkward in social situations.

This chapter may seem to offer a lot of rules to follow, but don't get discouraged if you find it hard to remember every single one. As long as you are kind, considerate, and respectful toward others, you can't go wrong.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones are wonderfully useful, but when used inappropriately, they can be a source of embarrassment or annoyance. They distract you from what's going on in front of you, and when you're distracted, it can be perceived as a lack of consideration toward others.



It's important to be fully present when you're speaking to someone. In a face-to-face conversation or in a meeting, people know when you're trying to sneak a peek at your phone. You're not a secret agent. There's only one 007—and I'm afraid it's not you or me. If you're in a meeting, keep your cell phone out of sight and out of mind. Let calls go to voice mail and check your messages later.

If you're going into a meeting and you might get an urgent phone call, let the other attendees know in advance: "I may have to leave the meeting to take an important call I'm expecting." Don't let this become a habit; these types of urgent calls should be few and far between.

Here are a few other tips for respectful cell phone use.

- ◆ **Stay calm.** Overly emotional cell phone conversations are awkward for the people around you. If you find yourself getting angry or upset, try to end the conversation and call the person back when you're alone.
- ◆ **Do not "cell yell."** Why is it that as soon as we're talking on a cell phone, we think the person we're talking to is stone-deaf? Use your normal speaking voice.
- ◆ **Never put your cell phone on the table.** Whether at a restaurant, a board meeting, or at home, cell phones should never be part of your place setting.
- ◆ **Keep your phone quiet at public events.** When you go to the movies, a play, sports events, or any other event, turn your ringer off or use the vibrate function.
- ◆ **Observe the ten-foot rule.** When talking on a cell phone, you should maintain a distance of at least ten feet from the person nearest you. It doesn't matter how softly you speak, if you are standing too close to someone, that person has no choice but to listen to your personal business. If you are expecting an important phone call in a public setting, ask permission to take the call, doing your best to keep it brief and out of proximity of others.
- ◆ **Love the one you're with.** When you are on a date or at a social engagement with others, don't take cell phone calls. Furthermore, it is not polite to take a call in the middle of a conversation. Let calls go to voice mail and return them later.
- ◆ **If you are driving now, you should talk later.** Sometimes multitasking is not a good idea. Proof of this is that accidents have increased due to the use of cell phones while driving; even if you use a hands-free device, you are still distracted. Your calls can wait until you have arrived at your destination. If the call is important and you cannot wait, pull your car over, park, and then make or accept your call.

Cell phone etiquette is just a matter of being considerate of others.

E-MAIL

The first thing you should keep in mind about e-mail is that once you hit Send, there's no going back. If you're stressed or upset when typing an e-mail, wait twenty-four hours and then reread the message before you send it.

Everything you send out in digital form (e-mails, blog posts, tweets, Facebook status updates, photographs, and videos) is all part of your "digital footprint." Keep your digital footprint clean since you never know who will see it. Never post or send an e-mail that you would not want your boss, grandmother, or a blind date to see. When it comes to the Internet and digital/viral media, there are no do-overs. What's done is done, and what's out there is out there. Forever. Never forget that.

Here are a few more e-mail etiquette tips.

- ◆ **Keep e-mails brief.** How's your in-box looking these days? Full, right? So is everyone else's. Don't make people read a dissertation in an e-mail message, because they probably won't.
- ◆ **Use proper spelling and grammar.** Just because it's an e-mail doesn't mean you should throw proper English out the window. Read your message carefully before hitting Send to catch any errors.
- ◆ **Don't write in all CAPS.** It's like shouting at the person who opens your e-mail.
- ◆ **Make sure you don't hit Reply All when you mean to hit Reply.** This is one of the biggest e-mail blunders people make and can lead to serious consequences, especially in the workplace.
- ◆ **Don't put anything too personal in an e-mail.** Remember that e-mail messages are easily forwarded, printed, and shared and can be saved forever.
- ◆ **Use bcc.** For everyone's privacy, when you're sending a message to a group of people, use the bcc (blind carbon copy) function, so the recipients can't see one another's e-mail address.
- ◆ **Use a subject line that tells the recipient what your e-mail is about.** If your entire message is contained in the subject line, use *eom* (end of message) so the recipient knows she doesn't have to open the e-mail. For example: "Subject: See you at lunch today! (eom)"
- ◆ **Please and thank you.** It is a good idea to read your e-mail out loud to be certain the tone is what you intend it to be. The use of the words *please* and *thank you* go a long way.
- ◆ **Never assume the intent of another person's e-mail to you.** If you are not sure of the person's objective, you should ask to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

Remember, e-mail is only one means of communication. Don't use it as a tool to avoid in-person or telephone conversations.



TEXT MESSAGING

Texting is great for sending short messages, especially when you're in a quiet environment and can't use your phone. Unfortunately, some of us have gotten so used to texting that we have forgotten it's not our only option!

Remember that text messaging is not a replacement for in-person or even telephone conversation, and that relationships are not built on text messages. It's also important to follow these texting rules:

- ◆ **Never text while driving.** It's extremely dangerous.
- ◆ **Never text (or read text messages) while you are in a meeting or talking to someone face-to-face.** It tells people that you don't care about what they have to say.
- ◆ **Never text in all CAPS.** It's like shouting at someone.
- ◆ **Think about how the recipient will "hear" your message.** In some cases, because the recipient can't hear the tone of your voice, your words may be received quite differently from how you intended.
- ◆ **Never use text messaging to deliver important or upsetting news.** Some things require an in-person conversation.
- ◆ **Never assume.** Finally, don't assume that everyone can receive text messages or knows how to access them. Some people simply don't use text messaging. If something is urgent, pick up the phone and call.

MAKING CONVERSATION

Conversation is meant to be a back-and-forth exchange between two people. It's not a lecture, a speech, or an interview. Here are a few tips to keep conversation flowing.

- ◆ **Try to get the other person to talk as much as possible.** Asking open-ended questions (such as "What are your travel plans this summer?") instead of yes/no questions (such as "Are you going on vacation?") is a great start.
- ◆ **When the other person is talking, pay attention!** This may sound simple, but it's easy to forget when your smartphone is buzzing.
- ◆ **Never ask someone "What do you do?"** Especially during difficult economic times—periods of layoffs

restructuring, downsizing, etc.—this question could turn out to be an awkward conversation stopper. Instead, ask something like “How do you like to spend your free time?”

♦ **If someone asks you what you do for a living, don’t give a one-word answer.** If you’re a consultant, for example, you might say, “I help small-business owners learn how to increase their revenue while decreasing their working hours.”

♦ **Demonstrate that you’re paying attention to what the other person is saying.** Maintain eye contact, nod when appropriate, and occasionally repeat what the other person says (a technique called mirroring). It means a lot to people when they know you’re focused on them.

♦ **Listen.** When someone asks you a question, make sure to listen to the entire question before answering. Otherwise you may end up giving an unresponsive or inappropriate answer. If someone asks you a question you don’t want to answer, try answering the question with another question. You can also try using humor and changing the subject. For example, if someone asks, “Who are you voting for for president?” instead of answering, you could say, “I’ve been so busy lately, I can’t even vote on what to have for dinner. Do you know of any great restaurants?”

♦ **Say the other person’s name.** It’s simple to do, but meaningful. People love hearing their own name because they want to feel known and be remembered, but don’t overdo it.

Every once in a while, you’ll run into people who want to tell you things you don’t really want to know. They might give you all the details of their latest medical problem, specific information about what they found last night in their baby’s diaper, or the latest update on their ex-spouse’s financial situation. In other words, TMI.

When this happens to you, do not ask any follow-up questions, even if it seems like the only possible response. As soon as you ask even a single question, you’re inviting the other person to continue—ad nauseam—with their inappropriate revelations. Instead, offer a short response, then steer the conversation in a new direction.

In the case of the parent with diaper details, for example, you could try something like “Sounds like you could use a vacation! When was the last time you were able to get away?” Hopefully the conversation will turn to their latest trip, and you won’t have to hear anything more about baby bottom.

NAME GAME

What if you can’t remember the name of the person you’re speaking with?

Whatever you do, never say “I forgot your name” or “I can’t remember your name.” Those kinds of statements will just make the other person feel bad, and they’re unnecessary. Instead, say something like “Your name is right on the tip of my tongue” or “It’s been such a long day, could you please tell me your name again?”

Of course, you’ll make an even better impression if you can remember the person’s name in the first place. If you have trouble remembering names, here are a few techniques to try.

♦ **Listen.** Really listen when someone is telling you his or her name. Sometimes instead of listening, we’re thinking about what to say next. Don’t do this. Listen to the person’s name and repeat it back as soon as possible: “It’s so nice to meet you, Jackson.”

♦ **Repeat.** After meeting someone new, say the person’s name a few times to imprint it in your memory. Use it while speaking to the person, but not so frequently that it feels strange.

♦ **Nickname.** Give the person a nickname that helps you remember them (Tall Timothy, for example). If you use this technique, make sure you don’t say the nickname out loud. Keep it to

yourself!

◆ ~~Write it down.~~ After you meet someone and go your separate ways, remember to key in and save your smartphone or computer the person's name, where you met them, and something that will remind you of what you discussed. This is especially helpful at networking events.

◆ **Spelling.** If a person has an unusual name or the name has more than one spelling, ask them how they spell it. If a name is generally spelled only one way, such as Robert or David, you could ask if they prefer Bob or Dave. Never shorten a person's name unless they have suggested you do so—for instance, by calling a woman Pat after she has stated her name is Patricia.

◆ **Repetition.** When someone tells you their name, say it and spell it three times to yourself.

◆ **Change focus.** Sometimes we forget someone's name because we are feeling socially self-conscious. Our focus is on whether *we* are looking, speaking, or acting acceptably. Turn your focus to the other person and on putting them at ease, and it will be much easier to recall their name.

◆ **Reintroduce yourself.** If you see someone you haven't seen in a long time, reintroduce yourself. This may prompt them to tell you their name as well.

◆ **You're brilliant!** When someone remembers your name and you just cannot remember theirs, try saying, "Wow, you have an amazing memory! Please tell me your name again; it's been a very long day."

POLITELY ENDING A CONVERSATION

From time to time you will encounter a "conversational rambler." Someone has you in their clutches and won't stop talking. To get away without being rude, start by saying something positive, such as "I'm so happy I got to talk to you." Follow up with a brief explanation of why you have to go: "I see someone else I have to speak to" or "I really should go say hello to the host before she disowns me." Then simply smile and excuse yourself.

Following are more examples of ways to politely end a conversation:

◆ **Long-winded friend on the phone.** "Can I call you later? I have some things to finish up and I'd better get busy."

◆ **Stranger strikes up a conversation.** Chances are you looked approachable. A positive way to end the conversation is to say, "It was nice talking with you, but I have to run. Have a good day!"

◆ **Coworker.** "Wow, you sure did a great job on that project!" Then quickly add, "And now I really have to get back to work." If you need to interact with this person to accomplish a task, request a meeting: "This is something that deserves more than a passing conversation. Would you please mail me some times when we can meet to resolve this efficiently?"

◆ **Boring relative.** "I'm so glad to hear about [whatever the relative has been talking about], but I have to better go check in on [elderly relative/baby/children/spouse/parent]. It's been great talking with you!"

◆ **Friendly drunk.** Proximity breeds conversation. You will want to move away after saying, "Well, have a good evening."

Some people seem to have an uncanny ability to structure their conversations to make it difficult to get out of them. Something about the way they drag out their stories makes escape nearly impossible. This is known as the "can't get a word in edgewise" dilemma.

If caught on the horns of that dilemma, you just have to make that uncomfortable leap and end the conversation. The best way is to begin with a simple apology, then follow with an explanation of why

you must go. “Hey, I’m really sorry. I know you have much more you want to tell me, but I’m running late for an appointment and I have to get going. Can we pick this up at a later date?”

Kindness is always imperative!

RESPONDING TO GOSSIP

Etiquette is about relationships, not rules. But I firmly believe in one rule: *Never gossip*. We’ve all done it, but that doesn’t make it right. If you can kick the habit, you’ll feel much better about yourself. Try to form a new habit, such as spreading good news or information about other people.

It can be difficult to refrain from gossiping, especially when you have a juicy bit of news about someone that would be of interest to others. You should still do your best to resist the urge. Remember, gossiping may get you attention, but that attention is fleeting. What lasts is your reputation as someone who cannot be trusted with confidential or personal information.

Even if you don’t initiate gossip yourself, you will inevitably encounter someone who does. When that happens, you have a few options:

- ◆ You can try to change the subject by saying something neutral and positive, such as “What a beautiful sweater! Where did you get it?”
- ◆ You could tell the other person that you’re not comfortable talking about people when they’re not there to defend themselves.
- ◆ Or try using my favorite response to gossip: “Oh, Lord, I have way too much to fix in myself before I use my time and energy talking about other people.”

SOCIAL MEDIA IN MODERN TIMES

How Social Media Made Secret Wishes Come True

In 2008, my friend Sandra McKenna @McMedia introduced me to the amazing world of social media as a great way to engage in business and also personal life. I remember I rolled my eyes and thought to myself, *I don't have time to fit even one more thing into my busy schedule.* I soon learned that I didn't have time *not* to.

Sandra is a travel and food writer. I watched her interactions on Twitter and Facebook yield her not only great connections but also free trips to Italy, Mexico, and other exciting destinations. She also landed interviews with major fashion designers and pop stars, and even had the good fortune to test-drive an Indy pace car. She soon became the writer and producer for the popular *Midlife Road Trip* show and has secured her dream job and now travels with a film crew all over the world, all because she connected with people via Twitter and Facebook. This is Sandra's advice:

"You have to be sincere, be yourself. People want to engage with real people. Using social media for business or for casual conversation is no different from the 'old-fashioned way' of meeting at a mixer. It's based on building trusted relationships. People were attracted to Sandra's sense of humor, her enthusiasm, her kindness, and her interest in them. Her persona online is the same as it is in real life.

Sandi was able to reach out to like-minded people and engage them in meaningful conversation. She took the time to share information with others and reaped the rewards.



Social media Web sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter allow us to quickly share information about our lives with anyone and everyone. This can be a great way to keep in touch, but remember there is no such thing as privacy when it comes to social media. Assume that everything you put on social media sites is permanent, searchable, and easily accessible for all time.

Before you post anything to a social media site (including photos, messages, links, etc.), ask yourself whether you would mind seeing it on the front page of your newspaper or AOL home page. If you wouldn't want to see it there, don't post it online.

There's no way to control what happens to your social media posts. Once they're made public, they're out there forever. Potential employers, future loved ones and their families, colleagues,

admissions officers, and everyone else you know and don't know will be able to find and view every comment, post, and photo.

As with any communication, consideration and kindness are most important when it comes to social media.

- ◆ When using social media for business, remember that you have to build relationships before you try to sell your products. How would you feel if you were at a party, having a nice conversation, and someone just walked up and launched into a sales pitch? That's what it's like when you jump into social media and immediately start selling.
- ◆ On Facebook, don't tag other people in unflattering or off-the-wall photos. Tags are searchable and you never know who will find them. If someone requests to be untagged, remove the tag as soon as possible.
- ◆ On Twitter, keep it real. Use a photo of yourself as your avatar (an avatar is an image that shows up next to your social media posts and tweets) and fill out the bio section. Use the same picture on all your social media sites for professionalism and continuity.

Don't use your Twitter and Facebook stream exclusively to promote yourself, or you will quickly become boring and others will "unfollow" you. The same thing goes for using direct messages to spam other users; it's not nice and it will cost you followers. Twitter and Facebook are about engaging other people, not pushing your sales message on anyone who will listen. Give and share interesting and useful information as frequently as possible.

FACEBOOK

Facebook has millions of active users and its numbers grow daily. It is one of the most visited Web sites in the world and is enjoyed by young and old. Many people have found that Facebook is a critical addition to their Web-working toolbox. It can be customized to be anything you want, from a way to keep in close contact with family and friends to an efficient professional tool for your business.

Below are some tips for navigating your way around Facebook.

- ◆ Make sure you have a presentable and updated profile. Use your real name and a current photo rather than a cartoon or graphic image. Be certain the picture is tasteful and neutral. Don't hold up an opinionated sign from the last political rally, or a foolhardy picture from your bachelorette party. Provide information about your work status, Web sites, blog, and e-mail. Be cautious about disclosing your real birth date or location, to protect against identity theft or the unlikely but frightening chance of stalkers. Customize your Facebook settings to limit what can be viewed by friends, family, coworkers, or employers.
- ◆ Provide value to your followers by sharing your hobbies, interesting information, pictures from trips, business news, and useful content.
- ◆ Be careful you don't post too many updates, such as "breathing in" and then the next second "breathing out." Lunch choices, weather reports, and depressing song lyrics will not add much value to your offerings, unless you are a food critic or songwriter.
- ◆ Don't be a cyberstalker. Avoid randomly friending people you don't know or posting on their walls. It sends a creepy message, and you could become known as a friend poacher. If you must friend a person you don't know, explain who you are in a direct message, why you are friending them, and how you know them. Example: "I'm your sister's college roommate." Or, better yet, have your roommate make the introduction by suggesting you as a friend on Facebook.

- ◆ Refrain from barging into someone's Facebook domain via instant chat. Don't assume your friends, family, and business colleagues are open and free to chat just because you see them online. If they don't immediately respond, they probably stepped away from the computer, are busy with work, or have other obligations.
- ◆ Avoid oversharing personal information and private emotions. It's Facebook, not *The Jerry Springer Show*. Keep your secrets, family skeletons, and grooming habits in the closet where they belong. Share them only with your closest friends.
- ◆ A proper response time to wall posts and messages is within twenty-four hours. If you check Facebook infrequently, let your contacts know that you respond to e-mail faster than Facebook.
- ◆ Don't alter the status of your relationship without first making that status change known to the other person. Before you do something in haste, think about all the people who will see what you post. Respect the feelings of others and refrain from embarrassing or hurtful actions.
- ◆ Direct business colleagues to your LinkedIn social media site if they ask to be Facebook friends and only accept requests from friends and family. Giving people another choice to connect as opposed to not responding is a more polite approach.

TWITTER

The social networking site Twitter has many great uses. Besides using it to keep family and friends connected to your daily life, you can use it for professional purposes, such as advertising job openings, business networking, and sharing news briefs. Twitter offers a microblogging platform whose posts are called tweets. Tweets are short posts of up to 140 characters that are displayed on your profile page. Twitter can add value to your networking life depending on how well you use it.

- ◆ No tweeting if you are in a meeting, with a group of people, or one-on-one with another person. Give real people your full attention. People always know if you're tweeting under the table no matter how inconspicuous you think you are.
- ◆ If you see a great tweet, it's okay to retweet it. Just be sure to give the original tweeter credit on your Twitter feed for their 140 characters of brilliance. If someone retweets what you share, be sure to thank them.
- ◆ Consider it an honor when people follow you. They are saying they like the content you share, so follow them as a reciprocal courtesy. An exception to this rule is if people follow you only to hawk their snake oil. In that case, unfollow them.
- ◆ Never tweet in sacred situations, such as church services, weddings, funerals, baptisms, bar mitzvahs, etc.
- ◆ Before you post a tweet, picture it in skywriting across the heavens. Never tweet while upset, inebriated, or unhappy with your boss or company. What you put out there will linger forever in cyberspace, so be cautious about tweeting negative content.
- ◆ Be neat when you tweet. Use proper grammar, since your grammar and usage tells a story about you. There is more than one way to be seen and received, so be careful with too many abbreviations and acronyms. We don't want others to have to decipher our tweets. Keep in mind that sloppily written posts are like leaving the house with your shirt incorrectly buttoned and one shoe untied.
- ◆ Hashtags should only be used when relevant. A hashtag highlights and covers events that are happening in real time. They bring communities of people with similar interests together. Random hashtags are unnecessary noise.
- ◆ Refrain from using automation tools to connect or communicate with your followers. Real-time

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