Etiquette Guide for Success

This guide will address etiquette in two general areas: professional dress and dining. This guide will assist you with each type of setting and give you the confidence you need to be successful.

Professional Dress

As you enter the workplace, it is important to understand what is considered to be appropriate dress. While this serves as a general guide, each employer may have their own interpretations and dress code. Be sure to consult with your mentor, supervisor or employee handbook if you have specific questions about dress in your organization.

Business Professional means suits. And by suits, it means that when bought, the jacket and the bottom piece should be on the same hanger. Black, blue or grey are always safe choices in terms of color. For women, the skirt should not be too short and a blouse should not be too low cut. Men need to wear a tie.

Business Casual means pants like khakis or casual skirts. Men should wear collared shirts.

Casual means jeans and casual tops. Jeans should be clean and not torn. Shirts should also be appropriate for a work setting without offensive language or graphics.

Sneakers, mini skirts, shorts, clothing that is ill fitting or torn generally have no place in the work setting. There may be some instances when you are off site at a more casual event where it would be appropriate to wear these things. Otherwise they should be avoided in your normal daily wardrobe.

Email Etiquette

Email has become an important part of all industries. Most of your communication will be done over email so it is important to use appropriate practices and behavior.

- Use the Subject line—Clearly summarize the contents of your message in the subject line. Many professional won’t read an email unless there is content in the subject line.
- Do not use CC to copy your message to everyone—the volume of emails we receive continues to grow so be mindful of the people who really need to be copied on your message. Also take care to not Reply All to a message. It may not be appropriate for everyone to receive your reply.
- Use BCCs when addressing a message that will go to a large group of people who do not necessarily know each other—Do not assume that someone is comfortable with you sharing their email address with people they might not know. To protect and respect everyone’s privacy, be sure to enter your address in the To field and everyone else’s address in the BCC field.
• Grammar counts—be sure to use proper capitalization in emails. Even if you are responding on a wireless device, it is still important to use proper business communication. Avoid using all caps in emails as well. It makes the message more difficult to read and also appears as though you are shooting! Take care to not revert to text speak. It would be too casual and unprofessional.
• Emoticons—Smileys and other graphics have no place in a business email. These are best left to your personal emails.
• As courtesy to your recipient, include your name at the bottom of the message—you can easily add a professional looking signature at the bottom of all your messages. This would include your email, phone number and fax number.

Dining Etiquette

In the world of business, you will encounter a variety of dining situations. You will have many opportunities to share a meal, attend a reception or be at a party with other businesspeople. Perhaps you will dine with a corporate executive at a CBA Career Services’ dinner or network with business people at a party. You may be invited to attend a reception as part of an employer’s open house, where you can learn about working for that particular employer. There is a strong chance that one of your job interviews will be conducted over lunch. We are going to outline three specific dining settings: the networking reception, the business lunch and the formal dinner.

A Brief History of Etiquette

Etiquette protocols have been a part of society for a long time. The first known “etiquette scroll” was written in 2500 BC. In the 11th century Europeans ate with their fingers but well-bred individuals only used three fingers. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, forks were used, however they were viewed as being scandalous and heretical. Erasmus wrote the most well-known etiquette book in the 16th century. It was called On Civility on Children. And finally, picking your teeth at the table with weaponry was considered an etiquette faux pas in the 17th century.

The Networking Reception

While these types of events aren’t as formal, it is still critical to be on your best behavior and keep in mind some general rules:

• Refrain from or if you are of legal age, limit the consumption of alcohol. If you are a candidate attending a reception as part of the interview process, it is never advised to consume alcohol. It is a growing trend for recruiters not to have alcohol at recruiting events. Making alcohol available is considered to be a violation of the National Association of Colleges and Employers ethical standards.
  o If you do choose to consume, have only one or two beverages. Corporate representatives keep an eye on consumption levels and associated behaviors.
• Serve yourself a small plate of hors d’oeuvres and move away from the food table. Remember, there might be limited seating or tables for resting your plate. Be sure to select food that can be easily eaten with one hand and standing up.
- Hold your plate or drink in your left hand, leaving your right hand free to shake hands and greet others.
- Do not talk with food in your mouth.
- Remember, depending on the circumstances and nature of the event, the focus is on meeting other professionals and not eating a full meal.
  - You will typically be served light fare: finger foods and appetizers.
- Be sure to circulate as much as you can. If this is part of an interview process, try to meet as many of the staff as you can. This is your opportunity to make a great impression on potential colleagues.
  - Introducing yourself to an existing conversation:
    - Never immediately interrupt the flow of the conversation. Either wait to be recognized by the corporate sponsor engaged in the conversation or wait for a meaningful pause in order to introduce yourself.
  - Exiting a conversation:
    - As mentioned prior, the purpose of a networking event is to meet as many people as possible. Therefore, it may be necessary to excuse yourself from a conversation.
      - Once again wait for a meaningful break in conversation to thank the corporate representative for their time, and ask for a business card.
      - Introduce a newcomer to the group and signal that as your exit.
      - Excuse yourself to refresh your beverage or acquire additional appetizers.

**The Business Lunch**

The Business Lunch, whether it is part of an interview or a meeting with clients, it is still a place for your best professional behavior. Whether you are the host or the guest, here are some simple things to keep in mind for a successful meeting:

- Always respond to the invitation; it is important for the host to know you are attending in advance.
- Once you have accepted the invitation, don’t break your commitment to attend. It sends a poor message regarding your scheduling.
  - If you must rescind after accepting, it is proper protocol to call the person who extended the invitation.
- Be prompt; it is okay to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early just as you would for an interview.
- Order familiar and easy to eat foods. Salads and pastas can get messy, and sandwiches should be avoided.
- If the host orders an alcoholic beverage, then you may follow their lead. Keep in mind that less is better.
- After opening pleasantries, keep the conversation to business. Don’t get too personal.
- Don’t loiter after the meal; be sure to ask for business cards and thank your host for the opportunity to meet with them.
- Send your host a thank you note.

The Formal Meal

You may be called upon to attend a formal reception, most commonly as part of a professional conference or recognition ceremony. There are general tables of anywhere from eight to 10 people, perhaps some you may know and others you haven’t yet met. Be sure to introduce yourself to the others seated at your table. Keep the conversation light.

During the meal:

- As soon as you are seated place your napkin on your lap. If you need to leave the table at any point in during the meal, place your napkin to the side of your plate instead of your chair.
- Refrain from or limit your alcohol consumption.
- If you are in a situation to order off a menu, order smart. Order foods that you are familiar with and know how to eat. This is not a time to impress your fellow diners with your culinary expertise.
  - If you do not have the option to choose what you are eating, be respectful of the options provided to you.
  - If you have special dietary restrictions, be discrete in letting wait staff know of your needs.
- If the water glasses are already filled, your glass will be on the right. Your bread plate will be on your left.
- When a beverage or bread is available at your table always offer it to others first and don’t take the last piece of bread until it is offered to the others at the table.
  - Always tear the bread piece by piece, do not bite into an entire roll.
- Food should travel to your mouth, NOT vice-versa.
  - When eating soup, always scoop the soup away from your body.
- Foreign objects should leave your mouth the same way they entered your mouth
- When in doubt, observe and follow the example of others.
What is all of this and when do I use it?

- Use utensils in order needed, start with those on the outside and work in towards your plate.
- Once you start using a utensil it should never be placed back on the table cloth; place it along the edge of your plate or bread plate, soup spoons should be left in the bowl.

1. Salad fork
2. Dinner fork
3. Entrée plate
4. Napkin
5. Dinner knife
6. Teaspoon
7. Soup spoon
8. Bread plate
9. Butter knife
10. Dessert spoon
11. Dessert fork
12. Beverage glass

- You may also have a salad plate which will be placed above your forks near the bread plate, a soup bowl which will be placed on top of your entrée plate or additional beverage glasses or a coffee mug which will be on the left-hand side above your spoons.
- Most importantly, don’t forget to enjoy the meal.

After the meal

- When you are finished eating, place the knife and fork together across the plate with the handles towards the right.
- Don’t loiter and waste time when the meal is over.
- Remember to send a thank you note to your host/hostess.

Source for this guide: