

# FGSR Professional Development Professional Practice Module



## Workplace Etiquette

Workplace etiquette makes work relationships run smoothly. There are several unwritten rules of conduct for the workplace. It is a good idea to try to follow the golden rule: “Treat others as you would like to be treated.” Good etiquette involves showing respect and courtesy for everyone. The rules are the same for men and women.

Generally, work etiquette includes all aspects of performing in the work environment, such as completing work on time, punctuality, being a good team player, listening to others, and following through (DuBrin, 2007). It also includes all aspects of interpersonal skills in the workplace, particularly when you frequently meet new people or participate in face-to-face discussions of any kind. It is hence imperative to be aware of these etiquettes since a large number of all interpersonal skills are non verbal. These non-verbal interpersonal skills include extent of directness, appropriate subjects for conversation, facial expressions and eye contact, loudness and pitch, silence, touch and personal space.

Success and self-confidence at work means:

- Enjoying challenges rather than avoiding them
- Saying no when you are overcommitted, stressed or ill
- Being willing to share knowledge and experience
- Being willing to face issues and to discuss them with others when necessary

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## Tips

- Use appropriate, respectful language and display proper behavior, even when you are upset.
- Ask permission to borrow money, equipment or supplies from others.
- Use positive talk to enhance the workplace atmosphere and create an energetic workplace. Say “Good morning!”
- Practice confidentiality, professionally and at a personal level. Do not gossip. If others gossip to you tell them you are feeling uncomfortable or that they are giving you too much information.
- Keep confidential or personal information private.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere for visitors.
- Be thoughtful when using the elevator and going through doorways. For example, hold the elevator door open for someone you see running to catch that elevator.
- Compliment co-workers sincerely and in an appropriate manner.
- Praise in public, reprimand in private.
- Use professional telephone etiquette. Introduce yourself or office/lab location. Use a friendly tone when on the phone.
- Give credit where it is due. Acknowledge others that have helped you at work.

- Respect other people's work space. Don't take other people's things and speak quietly especially in cubical or open work areas.
- Think before you speak. If there is conflict in the workplace think out your response before complaining or accusing someone.
- Stand up when you meet someone, especially at a meeting. Standing up allows an equal level -eye to eye contact. By remaining seated, you may be sending a message that the other person is important enough to warrant you standing up for. If you find yourself in a position where you can't stand up, offer an excuse and an explanation. However, this is more situational, depends mostly on culture and behaviour of a given place.
- Introduce yourself immediately. When you meet someone for the first time, say who you are in the first place. Don't stand around as if someone else is responsible for your introduction. It is not always enough to say, "Hi, I'm Joan Mgonja." Give more information whenever possible, e.g. "Hi, I'm Joan Mgonja. I work for CIBC Bank as a customer service manager."
- Pay attention to names. Not everyone wants to be addressed informally on the initial encounter. Use first names of people whom you have just met only after they give you permission.
- Things that are considered rude or annoying—avoid these to improve the work place
  - Talking badly about other employees
  - Arriving late to work and meetings
  - Standing too close or invading personal space
  - Taking phone calls and using blackberries during meetings
  - Inappropriate language
  - Loud gum chewing or eating
  - Not responding to greetings such as hello or good morning
  - Interrupting others
  - Loud talkers in cubical areas or offices if doors are kept open
  - Exposing body parts, inappropriate dress. Even though our acceptance of revealing clothing has increased in the public domain it is still considered the norm in work environments to dress conservatively. See section on Dressing for Success for more information.
  - Too much cologne or perfume
  - Not sharing resources fairly with the rest of the office

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## Activities To-Do On Your Own

- When introducing two people to one another, it's best to step aside and speak clearly. If you work with one of the people, but not with the other, start by introducing your colleague to the visitor ("Joan, this is Joel Garber, our Human Resources Director."), then introduce the visitor to your colleague ("Joel, this is Charles Steven. He's the Chief Accountant at Scotia Bank.").
- If you forget someone's name during an introduction, don't panic. Look the person directly in the eye and with a sincere smile; say "I'm sorry; your name just slipped my mind. Could you remind me?" Then keep on as if nothing happened.

- Identify a past volatile work situations and recall how you managed it. List what you believe the issue was and what your response to the situation. Consider if your response escalated the situation or diffuse it? After some reflection, note what you could have done differently to resolve the conflict.
  - Some topics of discussion are more suited for workplace discussion. Impersonal topics that are usually NOT suited for a workplace are religion, politics, money, and salary. Topics that are less likely to evoke strong opinions or reveal personal information include the weather, news, entertainment, sports, and your surroundings. Can you think about something that you could discuss in these categories?
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## Other Resources

- DuBrian, A. (2007). Human Relations: Interpersonal Job- Oriented Skill. 9th Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Quinn, R. E. et al (2003). Becoming A Master Manager: A Competency Framework, 3rd Edition. Wiley.
- [http://www.sideroad.com/Business\\_Etiquette/workplace-etiquette.html](http://www.sideroad.com/Business_Etiquette/workplace-etiquette.html)
- [http://www.sideroad.com/Business\\_Etiquette/etiquette\\_meeting.html](http://www.sideroad.com/Business_Etiquette/etiquette_meeting.html)
- [http://www.ryangrpinc.com/etiquette\\_tips\\_business.asp](http://www.ryangrpinc.com/etiquette_tips_business.asp)
- <http://www.gradview.com/careers/etiquette.html>
- [http://www.umich.edu/~urecord/9596/Jun11\\_96/artcl17.htm](http://www.umich.edu/~urecord/9596/Jun11_96/artcl17.htm)
- <http://www.howtodothings.com/careers/a3573-how-to-encourage-workplace-etiquette-in-employees.html>