

12

Tips To Succeed: Mind your Manners for a good first impression

It takes only three to five seconds to make a first impression, but it can take a whole career to undo it. Here's what you should keep in mind during those first fateful moments to make a positive impression at an interview, conference, party or any other time you meet new faces.

The tardiness taboo

The most important guideline is the most fundamental: Don't be late. Ever.

Figure out how long it takes to get to your meeting point and allow extra time. It's better to arrive early than risk tardiness. For interviews and other important events, do a practice run in advance to clock the drive and make sure you know the route.

If you arrive more than 10 minutes ahead of schedule, take a short walk before going inside. Arriving too early can rattle the person you're meeting.

Appearances

It's an unfortunate fact of human nature that before you even say hello, people form an opinion of you based on how you look.

In business settings, look sharp by dressing slightly more formally than the people you're meeting with. Avoid distracting accents, like excessive jewelry or a goofy tie.

Your clothes should not draw attention to you. And don't leave a bad impression by forgetting the rear view.

Check the back of your clothes in the mirror for rips and stains. Make sure you're tucked in where you should be. Also examine the back of your shoes for mud splashes or worn-down heels.

Presenting yourself

At events where you have a chance to make new contacts, take a proactive approach. Peter Post (Emily's grandson) says, "Go in with an attitude that says you're going to participate, you're going to be willing to go up and introduce yourself to people and start conversations."

It takes guts to approach strangers, but if you do it with charm, those you meet will be impressed by your sociability.

[Previous Page](#)[Next Page](#)[Continue](#)[Table of Contents](#)

Post recommends four actions to ensure a positive first impression:

- Stand up to get on eye level with the person.
- Look them in the eye.
- Give a firm handshake, but don't "bone crush" them. Keep your shoulders and feet oriented toward the person.
- Repeat the person's name and say you're pleased to meet them.

Fine-tune and rehearse your self-introduction, a 10-second or less sound-bite (elevator speech) that includes your first and last name and a snippet of background information to kindle conversation.

Example: Hello, I'm Denise Kersten, a careers columnist for *USATO-DAY.com*.

Making connections

Introducing others will make you seem gracious and well connected, but be sure to follow the proper protocol.

In social situations the order in which you introduce two people is based on gender and age (women and older people first).

In business settings the order is determined by rank.

Introduce the lower-ranking person to the higher-ranking person, then reverse the order, so you say each person's name two times.

Try to add an interesting tidbit to start the conversation. If you were introducing Mrs. Smith, a vice president of the company, to Mr. Jones, a junior associate, for example, you might say:

If you are unsure who the more important person is, default to the gender and age guideline.

Don't panic if you forget a name. Most people will be happy to remind you and appreciate the introduction.

Chit chat

Conversation is more like a tennis match than a golf game. Hitting the ball too many times in a row is a serious faux pas. Instead, try to establish a back-and-forth volley.

Asking questions about the other person's background and mentioning that interesting item you read in the newspaper are tried-and-true chat starters or icebreakers. Stay away from politically charged or sensitive topics with people you've just met.

Also avoid alienating individuals with different professional backgrounds.

Stay away from industry language and acronyms. It may make you feel plugged in, but it can turn-off uninitiated listeners.

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

[Continue](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

If you succeed at establishing rapport with a new contact, you may ask for their business card and offer yours. But only do so in the context of building a mutually-beneficial relationship, or you may come across as pushy.

The recovery

We all make etiquette slip-ups from time to time. Even Peter Post admits to the occasional oversight. But you can minimize the damage with a sincere apology.

"Acknowledge your mistake. Don't try to put it off on somebody else. Accept it as your mistake. Then correct it," Post says.

For the less serious offenses a simple "excuse me" goes a long way.

Denise Kersten - *USATODAY.com*
Dana May Casperson - Author of *Power Etiquette: What You Don't Know Can Kill Your Career*

[Previous Page](#)[Next Page](#)[Table of Contents](#)

30

Tips to Succeed: Know your etiquette in business settings

Dining out with your boss or a client is your chance to make a good impression.

- Can I drink soda or beer from the bottle?

No. Use a glass.

- What if I am served something that I don't know how to eat?

Watch your host and do what he or she does. You may not be right, but you won't be wrong. And when you do have a choice of foods, don't order anything that you don't know how to eat.

- Is it OK to kiss colleagues in business social situations?

The handshake is the proper business greeting in most business and business social situations. Yet there can be situations where kissing may be OK, depending upon:

A. Your relationship with the person. If people know each other well, they may kiss at business social events.

B. The type of company you work for. Large, formal, or conservative companies usually have less kissing than smaller, creative or informal types of companies.

C. The type of business functions you attend. Company picnics may be more relaxed and informal than business dinners at a fancy restaurant.

D. When in doubt, shake hands.

Barbara Pachter - Author -When The Little Things Count ...And They Always Count

[Previous Page](#)[Next Page](#)[Table of Contents](#)

There are five basic types of handshakes most of us have experienced – none is correct.

Try *this* for success:

PROPER HANDSHAKING

The protocol for handshaking is simple to learn: Walk up to the person you want to meet. Look into their eyes, smile and extend your hand. Offer a warm, firm, palm-to-palm handshake.

When you proffer your hand to a stranger or a distant acquaintance, simultaneously say, "My name is.....(use both first and last names). This way you eliminate the awkward moment of the forgotten name. The person being greeted is often relieved at being reminded, and will usually respond with their full name, which will in turn relieve you.

Both men and women should rise to shake hands. Rising is a compliment – it shows energy and eagerness to connect.

Initiating a proper handshake will make an incredibly positive impression. You will be perceived as a person who is knowledgeable, possesses excellent social skills and has leadership capabilities.

An excellent handshake shows your charm and self-confidence. It becomes an integral part of your style.

DON'T BE ONE OF THESE:

• Knuckle Cruncher

This type of person is earnest but nervous. While meaning to convey warmth through a tight grip of your hand, the person only causes you pain. The impression created is definitely that of a person who lacks sensitivity.

• Dead Fish Handshaker

This type of person, who places a limp, lifeless hand in yours, is sending a negative message. While the knuckle cruncher hurts you, at least there is a desire to express a real feeling. You are left with the impression of this person having a lackluster personality.

• Pumper

This handshake is overly eager but also insecure. This person doesn't know when to quit, almost as if stalling because of not knowing what to do next. They keep on vigorously pumping your hand up and down – and with it your entire arm. You may not feel pain but you certainly feel foolish.

- **Sanitary Handshaker**

This person will barely put three or four fingers in your hand-and then withdraw them quickly, almost as if afraid of catching a dread disease. They appear timid and sheepish.

- **Condolence Handshaker**

This is the person who comes across as too familiar, clasping your right arm or hand, and perhaps attempting to hug you. This behavior may be appreciated at a funeral, but it comes across as condescending and inappropriate.

The Canadian Progress Club - Bob Lockhart - National President Elect
www.progressclub.ca/Whats_New/Progression/2005_03/04Features_01.htm

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

When meeting people both your nonverbal and verbal behavior help to define your social skills. Using effective handshakes, good eye contact, and making the proper introductions show proper etiquette.

A. Handshakes are vital in social situations.

1. Develop a comfortable handshake and keep it consistent.
2. Handshakes should not be too hard; or too soft.
3. Make a solid connection of the web skin between the thumb and forefinger.
4. The host or person with the most authority usually initiates the handshake.

B. Eye contact is another critical factor when meeting people.

1. Eye contact increases trust.
2. It shows confidence and good interpersonal skills.
3. Eye contact shows respect for the person and business situation.

Proper introductions help to establish rapport when meeting people.

1. Authority defines whose name is said first. Say the name of the most important person first and then the name of the person being introduced.
2. Introduce people in the following order:
 1. younger to older
 2. non-official to official
 3. junior executive to senior executive
 4. colleague to customer
3. Keep the introduction basic.
4. Remember names for future reference.
5. Provide some information about the people you are introducing to clarify your relationship with that person.
6. Always carry business cards.
7. Keep notes on people in order to follow-up both personally and professionally.

The Career Center - Florida State University

Techniques to Succeed: Turning the 'green' handshake into the 'confident' handshake

Delivering a proper handshake can make or break your first impression on a person. A handshake that's too limp or weak can convey weakness or lack of self-confidence. A handshake that's too strong or crushing can convey hostility. A well-executed handshake is one that conveys self-confidence, trust, and a genuine interest in the other party.

Several factors contributing to a good handshake, from start to finish.

A handshake is generally common courtesy during most introductions, and when greeting a familiar person.

- **Eye contact.** Once your hands have met, you should make eye contact and maintain it throughout the handshake. If you're particularly coordinated, or gifted with great peripheral vision, make eye contact prior to the handshake, and maintain it for the duration.
- **Grip.** Grip with your whole hand, not just the fingertips or just the thumb. Make it firm, but not crushing. A good help for learning this would be asking a friend to help you practice your handshake grip. In most situations, you should only use one hand. Using both could convey hostility, or intent to overpower.
- **Position.** Your body should be approximately 12 to 20 inches away from the other party. Both parties' hands should be straight up-and-down, even with each other. The web of your hand (skin running between the forefinger and the thumb) should meet the web of theirs.
- **Shake.** Should be smooth, not limp or over-enthusiastic. Shake from the elbow, not the wrist or the shoulder.
- **Flow.** Before the handshake, establish eye contact. Break eye contact, if needed, to extend your hand to meet theirs. When the web of your hand meets the web of theirs, re-establish eye contact and engage your grip. Shake two or three times, for a duration of one to three seconds, breaking off cleanly and smoothly before the introduction is over.

To test your handshaking finesse, try shaking hands with a few close friends.

www.faqfarm.com/Q/How_does_one_give_a_proper_handshake

236

Techniques to Succeed: The dreaded social kiss

Social kisses can be awkward – to both women *and* men. But they seem to be spreading everywhere – including business functions. In fact, they have become almost a universal greeting.

Peggy Post, author of the 16th edition of her great-grandmother-in-law's book, *Emily Post's Etiquette*, seems a bit concerned that social kissing has become "almost a universal greeting." At least when reserved strictly for those close to you, though, she approves of it as a method for greeting.

Emily Post's Etiquette suggests, "The social kiss is a charming way to greet family and friends...but not random people. Ms. Post's advice: "Do what you are comfortable with. There's no law that says you have to lay a social kiss when greeting anyone, and if you see one coming at you, just make sure to follow these basic rules. Try to kiss on the right cheek. Always aim to the right. That provides a sense of order, and helps you avoid smacking heads."

It is not *improper* to gently take the hand of the other person just before the kiss. It is also wise to take the cue from the other person – which does not mean that just because he or she expects a social kiss, they are going to get one.

It is important in business, though, to master the technique, to avoid awkwardness.

[Previous Page](#)[Next Page](#)[Table of Contents](#)