

## DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE AND COMMUNICATION STYLE

How you present yourself in all facets of your life is critical to your success in obtaining an internship, or your first job, or any job. It is not just about your qualifications. You must handle yourself well in professional situations, including interviews, networking conversations, lunch and dinner. If you handle these situations in a mature and confident manner, you will show yourself as ready to make the transition from student to professional.



### Things to consider

- All of your conversations, body language, eating and drinking make an impression and affect your chances of receiving a job offer.
- Dress is critical to success. Do your homework ahead of time to know what is appropriate. It is always best to be more formal than is called for. It is time to buy a professional suit if you don't have one.
- Be as prepared as possible for any event. If you know you will be eating at a particular restaurant research their menu on-line ahead of time.
- Treat all people in a professional situation the way you would like to be treated. Everyone you have contact with may be asked their opinion of you.
- Writing skills are critical in every phase of professional communication. E-mails must

be well written and proofread for errors just like any other piece of writing.

- Developing phone communication skills is equally important. Leaving well thought out messages is critical as you connect with people. Being articulate and kind can help you in every phase of your professional life.

### Other important notes to consider

- Be sure your image on social media is professional. More and more employers are using Facebook and LinkedIn and your on-line material could affect your job search.
- Be sure that you have a professional e-mail address and voice mail message on your phone. Change them if needed.
- Finally, be sure that you have developed strong resumes, cover letters and interviewing techniques. Work with Career Services and anybody else you trust to develop the best documents.

### Preparing for an event or interview

- If you attend an event, schedule a networking meeting, or have an interview it is essential to do some homework on the people you will be with or the organization in which you are interested.
- Study where you are going and how to get there. Plan for weather and traffic. Give yourself time to go to the restroom when you get there.
- Prepare and practice a 30 second self-introduction that will help you quickly introduce yourself to people.

### Effective Introductions

- First impressions are critical to success. A firm, sincere handshake is the best introduction. Look people in the eye, and repeat their name as you shake hands (e.g., Nice to meet you, Mr. or Ms. -----).

- Again, have a 30 second commercial about who you are and your interests as you talk to people. (See the Personal Branding Tipsheet available in Career Services or on our website.)
- If nametags are being used, place it on your right side so people can spot it easily when shaking your hand.
- If you are seated at a table, stand when being introduced or shaking hands.
- Be sure to greet and introduce yourself to the host/hostess if there is one.

- Unfold your napkin and place in your lap. Make sure it is folded in half with fold towards you.
- If you must leave the table, fold napkin and place in your seat for when you return.
- Silverware is always used from the outside in. So the small fork is for a salad or first course and so on.
- Once you are finished, fold up your napkin and place next to your plate. Never put the napkin on your plate.

### **Effective Conversations**

- Maintain good eye contact while being introduced or in conversations.
- A good way to start conversations is to ask the person something about themselves (e.g., How did you get to where you are? Why do you like what you do?).
- If the event includes food, circulate first before heading to the bar or buffet.
- Keep your conversation professional in nature at all times. If you wouldn't tell your mother something, keep it to yourself.

### **Final thoughts at end of event**

- At a meal interview, the employer will pay, but be sure to thank them.
- In a networking meeting, be prepared to pay for the meal or coffee, if you initiated the meeting.
- At a reception, be sure to thank the host/hostess directly, with a smile and firm handshake.
- Within 48 hours of any interview, meeting, or reception write a short thank you note to the host/hostess, interviewer, or anyone else that took time out to meet you.

### **How to handle food and drink**

- Avoid sloppy foods that might spill or be difficult to eat. Salads, spaghetti, foods you have to handle, and big sandwiches can be difficult.
- Eat and drink lightly so you can focus on the conversation. This is not your last meal and you can get food after the event.
- If you are at a reception keep either food or drink in your left hand, leaving your right hand free to shake. Don't hold both at the same time. Limit the amount of food on your plate. You can always go back.
- If alcohol is served, limit yourself to one drink or none at all. If you drink beer, pour it in a glass. If you drink wine, hold reds by the bowl and whites by the stem.

**Re-emphasizing an important note:** Be sure to clean up your on-line presence (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter). Employers are looking and content is affecting their decisions. Also, remember to have a professional e-mail address and voice message too.



**Check out this YouTube video on dining etiquette.**

### **Contact Career Services**

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### **How to handle a sit down meal:**

- Wait until you are asked to sit down and never sit down first.