

# Top 5 office etiquette tips



In the workplace, it is important to conduct yourself respectfully and courteously in order to create an effective, and appropriate, office environment. We spend about one-third of our working lives at the office, so the people we work with can affect our productivity and our overall job satisfaction, and vice versa.

**These guidelines will help you to avoid behaving in distracting (or potentially obnoxious) ways:**

## 1. Respect people's privacy

Show respect for each other's workspace and knock before entering, if necessary. Because you're most likely in an open office area, you inevitably will overhear snippets of conversations other people are having. Think carefully before joining that conversation. Keep your interruptions of others to a minimum and always apologise if your intrusion is an interruption of a discussion, someone's concentration, or other activity. Don't hover around while waiting for a co-worker to get off the phone. Leave a note for them to call you or return later.

## 2. Watch the volume of your voice

Keep your voice at a reasonable level. Other people, trying to work, may be distracted by your voice, even if what you are saying is work-related. If you have something personal or otherwise sensitive to discuss, consider doing it in a private office or conference room. Speak clearly without shouting as loud people can be both distracting and irritating.

## 3. Fix, or attempt to fix, what you break

How many times have you gone to the photocopier to find that it was either out of toner, out of paper, or experiencing a paper jam? The problem was still around when you arrived because the previous person did nothing about it and simply left the copier in its problem condition. Don't be that person.

If you can clear the paper jam safely and according to procedure, try to do so. Most photocopiers have diagrams to show you how. If you can't fix the jam or the other problem, leave a signed, dated note describing the issue and what you are doing to fix it or have it fixed. Those actions could be a call to the maintenance vendor or to an administrative department. Co-workers will appreciate your efforts, and signing your name to the note demonstrates your willingness to take ownership.

## 4. Keep the communal areas clean

Make sure that you respect the communal areas in the office such as 'break' rooms and staff kitchens. Refrigerators and microwaves should be wiped clean after you use them and if you do spill something in either place, clean it up. Make sure that old food that you have stored in the kitchen is thrown out if you do not use it. Don't leave it for someone else. NEVER take food from the fridge if it is not yours. This may seem insignificant to you at the time, but it is theft, and can be dealt with as such.

## 5. Maintain good personal hygiene

Wear appropriate office attire and be as neat, clean, and as conservative as the business requires you to be. Personal hygiene is a matter of professional courtesy: everyone is entitled to an office environment free from offensive smells and sights. Constantly monitor your own hygiene and behaviour. Try to see yourself from others' perspectives and make sure you take pride in your appearance. Be sure to shower regularly and use a suitable deodorant and never cough or sneeze in anyone's direction.