

# YOUR CAREER

## Test Your Etiquette

Do you need a refresher course in business etiquette? Take this quiz to find out.

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Photo by Eyewire

Basic business manners encompass much more than saying *please*, *thank you*, *hello*, and *goodbye*. Etiquette spans the realm from customer service to ethics. What's your etiquette IQ? Test yourself by answering the questions below. Answers are *True* or *False* unless otherwise noted.

1. This is a proper introduction: "Ms. Boss, I'd like you to meet our client, Mr. Smith."

*False*. The name of the person with the greatest authority or importance should

be mentioned first, and clients always take precedence. Also, a proper business introduction should include first and last names, for example, "Bill Smith."

2. If someone forgets to introduce you, let the conversation continue without comment.

*False*. You should introduce yourself by saying something like, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I don't believe we've met."

Or, "I am \_\_\_\_\_ , Joe's wife, and you are?"

3. If you forget a name, keep talking and hope no one will notice.

*False.* It's OK to admit that you can't remember. Say, "Your face is familiar, please help me with your name." Or, "My mind just went blank, your name is?" Or offer your name and wait for the other person to respond with hers.

4. When shaking hands, a man should wait for a woman to extend her hand.

*False.* Business etiquette has become gender neutral. Men don't have to wait for women to offer their hand first.

5. Who goes through a revolving door first?

a. Host

b. Visitor

a. Host. That enables him or her to lead the guest to their meeting place.

6. It's OK to hold private conversations (in person or on a cell phone) in office bathrooms, elevators, and other public spaces.

*False.* The walls have ears: You never know who could be overhearing details of your business transaction or personal life. And it's rude to invade public areas with your conversation.

7. If you carry a drink at a cocktail party, hold it in your left hand.

*True.* That will allow you to shake hands without having to juggle.

8. What percentage of a message is conveyed by your appearance?

a. 30 percent

b. 55 percent

c. 75 percent

b. 55 percent. Your clothing should fit and be appropriate for the workplace, and you should be properly groomed. That may seem to be common sense, but the trend to business casual 24/7 has led to some sloppiness. Also pay attention to your body language, and don't forget to smile!

9. When two U.S. businesspeople are talking, the distance between them should be approximately

a. 1 1/2 feet

b. 3 feet

c. 7 feet

b. 3 feet. Closer invades personal space; farther apart forces people to raise their voices. The appropriate physical distance for communicating varies according to country; inform yourself about the cultural differences.

10. If a business associate's fly is open, you should let him know.

*True.* You'd want someone to tell you, wouldn't you? Instead of letting him be embarrassed, take him aside discreetly.

11. It's acceptable for women to dress somewhat sexily for company parties.

The walls have ears:  
You never know  
who could overhear  
your business details.

*False.* They're still business events, so women (and men) need to dress appropriately and professionally.

12. Business casual attire requires hose for women, socks for men.

*True.* An exception is when your company holds an event at a beach or pool.

13. To signal that you don't want wine, turn your wine glass upside down.

*False.* Just wave your hand over it when asked or say, "No, thank you."

14. The host (the person who does the inviting) pays for the meal.

*True.* If you're the host, select a restaurant where you can afford everything on the menu. Also, check that it offers a variety of food and good service, as well as an atmosphere conducive to business.

15. Place your napkin on your chair as you leave the restaurant.

*False.* Place a cloth or linen napkin on the table to the left of the plate when you're finished eating. Place it on the

chair when you leave temporarily, such as to go to the restroom or make a call.

16. If a call is disconnected, it's the caller's responsibility to redial.

*True.* The person who initiated the call should redial if the connection is broken, no matter what the reason.

17. When using a speakerphone, you should announce if anyone else is present.

*True.* If you must use a speakerphone, which I advise against unless it's a conference call, it's imperative to inform all parties who's present.

18. Change your voicemail message when you're out of the office.

*True.* You should record a greeting such as, "I'm out of the office today, March 12. If you need help, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at extension 123."

19. It's OK to send confidential information and large attachments in email messages.

*False.* There's no such thing as private email. Even after you think you've deleted a message, any competent IT professional can retrieve it. Don't send confidential information externally and be wary of sending it internally. Also be selective about sending large attachments. They may take hours to download on a slow connection or take up too much space on your recipient's hard drive. Instead, use traditional mail. Despite recent scares, it's still the best way to deliver large packets.

20. Important snail mail, email, and voicemail should be answered within

a. 24 hours

b. 48 hours

c. 4 days?

a. 24 hours. Follow-up is critical in business, both within your company and externally. Waiting more than a day is unprofessional and could cost you a business deal, client, or project.

21. You should avoid such salutations as *Dear Sir/Ms.* and *To Whom It May Concern.*

*True.* They show that you didn't consider the recipient important enough to research his or her name.

### Overhear a cubicle conversation? Only interject if you can assist the person.

22. Typed thank-you notes are more business-like.

*False.* A nicely handwritten thank-you note works wonders. The recipient will feel special and appreciate that you took the time.

23. If you overhear a colleague's conversation in a cubicle, it's OK to comment on what you heard.

*False.* Use discretion in this situation. If you do overhear a conversation, you may interject only if you can assist the person in some way.

#### Scoring

0-7 correct. *Uh, oh!* You probably forget to fill the photocopier with paper and pilfer paperclips from co-workers. Buy an etiquette book or consider hiring a coach to help you polish your professional image.

8-15 correct. Not bad. You occasionally forget that sweatpants aren't business casual attire. Still, there's hope. Find a role model or mentor, and vow to improve your workplace etiquette.

16-23 correct. Good for you. You probably remember to send a thank-you note to a client you just met, and you never forget to call your office if you expect to be late.

**Marjorie Brody** works with individuals and organizations to strengthen their professionalism, persuasiveness, and presence. Her latest book is *Help! Was That a Career Limiting Move?*; [www.brodycommunications.com](http://www.brodycommunications.com).

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