



SENATE OF  
VIRGINIA



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December 5, 2023  
Richmond, Virginia

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# Your Professional Presence

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## *First impressions count*

Within the first 30 seconds of meeting someone, they form an opinion about you.

- ◆ 7 percent is based on our verbal communication.
- ◆ 38 percent is based on presentation, body language, and tone of voice.
- ◆ 55 percent is based on how we look.

## *Your attire should*

- ◆ Complement you physically.
- ◆ Be appropriate for the situation/occasion.
- ◆ Be current and fashionable.
- ◆ Reflect your personality.

## *Grooming*

- ◆ Hairstyles should be neat and professional. Hair clean, dry, and off the face.
- ◆ Manicures should complement, not distract from, appearance.
- ◆ Make-up should complement your features.
- ◆ Fragrances should be applied sparingly. No fragrances on the hands.
- ◆ Pro Tip: Keep a kit of essentials in your desk (toothbrush and toothpaste, hairspray, nail polish, etc.) for touch-ups if needed.

# Finding the Finds

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- ◆ Take a look at pieces you already have. You may have more in your closet than you realize. Enlist the assistance of a friend to help guide you on what is business attire, business casual, etc. A good place to get photo examples is the Brooks Brothers website.
- ◆ Look at what colors you have. Black, navy, and gray are all good for business. Women's suits can be complemented with white, light blue, green, or lilac blouses. Men's suits can be complemented with white or blue Oxford or broadcloth shirts. Jewelry, scarves, and ties that blend with the other colors are good choices.
- ◆ See if you can put together a few outfits from your existing clothing. Sometimes it takes a fresh eye to assemble pieces in a different way.
- ◆ Take stock of what's missing. Might you need some classic blazers in black, blue, or gray? Maybe a black skirt that goes from work to after work with the change of a top? Heels in black and navy? Nice loafers? Make a list.
- ◆ Now for the shopping! I'm a big fan of consignment stores, thrift stores, and eBay for finding great deals on good quality clothing. You may have better luck finding men's clothing on eBay.
- ◆ Look for name brands. Don't worry if the garment might need slight alterations. Remember, you're getting a fantastic piece at a fraction of the cost new. You can spend a few dollars on the tailor. On the way home, drop everything at the dry cleaner, so you'll start fresh. You may also be able to score a great handbag at consignment prices. Nice to have a snappy Kate Spade to complement your look.
- ◆ Spend some time on Sundays putting together your outfits for the week. Plan to wear the suit that makes you feel confident on the day you have that important meeting. Doing this on Sunday will ensure you aren't rushed getting ready Monday through Friday.
- ◆ Don't worry if your wardrobe is limited at first. Add pieces as your budget allows. Do some mixing and matching with what you have. And remember, you can change a look with accessories. Jewelry, ties, and scarves are your friends.

# Handshaking

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I'm ready to connect for a correct handshake.



Both hands are connecting for a correct handshake.



A correctly executed handshake. Make sure your grip is not too tight or too loose. Find the right balance.



WRONG: The "bone crusher" grips too tightly, is uncomfortable, and can indicate aggression.



WRONG: The "glove handshake" projects overconfidence or dominance.



WRONG: The "fingertip holder" or "dead fish" projects weakness and is unprofessional.

# Introductions and Forms of Address

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## *Introducing yourself*

- ◆ Introducing yourself is how you make yourself known to others.
- ◆ Introduce yourself with confidence and clarity.
- ◆ Always state your first and last name.

## *When do you introduce yourself?*

- ◆ When you recognize someone and they do not recognize you.
- ◆ When attending a gathering, business, or social event.
- ◆ When seated next to someone.
- ◆ When the person introducing you does not remember your name.
- ◆ When meeting a friend of a friend.

## *Introducing others*

- ◆ Greater authority/precedence receives lesser authority/precedence.
- ◆ Pro Tip: Always say the name of the person of greater authority first.
- ◆ State the person's name and something about them to help get the conversation started.

# Workplace Conversations

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*Clear communication is vitally important to workplace (and life) success. Consider these strategies when holding conversations.*

## *Delivering information*

- ◆ Impart clear and complete information.
- ◆ Stick to the topic.
- ◆ Don't assume the other person knows more than they might.
- ◆ Be open to and encourage questions.
- ◆ If there is to be follow up, set clear expectations.
- ◆ If there is a concern about accountability, send a follow-up email summarizing the conversation.

## *Receiving information*

- ◆ Listen with complete attention.
- ◆ Ask questions to ensure you fully understand the information.
- ◆ Ensure that if there are action steps that you understand what is expected and any deadlines you are expected to meet.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to go back and ask additional questions once you start working on an assignment.
- ◆ If there is a concern about accountability, send a follow-up email summarizing the conversation.

# Conversations (continued)

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## *Challenging conversations*

- ◆ Stay calm. If you're the one who is upset, wait until you are calm to initiate the conversation.
- ◆ Find a quiet place for the conversation.
- ◆ Listen with complete attention. Sometimes people just need to vent. Remember that telling an upset person to calm down rarely works. Instead, offer to have a conversation about the issue.
- ◆ Ask questions to ensure you understand the problem.
- ◆ Be clear about what you can or cannot do about the problem.
- ◆ If you need to involve someone else in the discussion, do so.
- ◆ If follow up is warranted, do so.



# Modes of Communication

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*All forms of communication are important in the social and business arenas. With so many options it's even more important than ever that communication be conducted on a professional level.*

## *Telephone protocol*

- ◆ Business telephones must be answered in a professional and pleasant manner. As in, "Good morning/good afternoon. Senator Smith's office. This is Ellen Hillman. How may I help you?"
- ◆ A caller should always identify themselves and their company or organization. As in, "Good morning/good afternoon. This is Charlotte Gomez with Senator Smith's office. May I please speak to Ms. Klein in Accounting?"
- ◆ Take and give clear information – name, company/organization, phone number, and a convenient time to return a call.
- ◆ Calls should be returned ideally in the same business day, but not later than the next day.

## *Cell phone*

- ◆ Remember that a cell phone conversation in a crowded area is not private.
- ◆ Turn off your cell phone in business meetings, churches, restaurants, theatres, concerts, etc. Use a signal that vibrates to notify you of a phone call.
- ◆ Your cell phone should remain in silent mode and off the table in business meetings, unless you are asked to look something up.

# Communication (continued)

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## *Voice mail – greetings*

- ◆ Record a professional message on your voice mail, such as, “Hello, you have reached Julia Thomas. Please leave your name, number, a brief message, and convenient time to return your call. Thank you.”

## *Voice mail – leaving a message*

- ◆ Identify yourself, your company or organization, your telephone number, and the purpose of your call. Include in your message the date, time, and a convenient time to return your call.

## *Speakerphone*

- ◆ Always ask for permission before putting someone on speakerphone. Identify other persons in the room who have access to the call. Same rule applies if you are in your car.

## *Email*

- ◆ Be professional and conduct yourself in a business-like manner at all times using appropriate business language. Be direct and to the point. Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Remember that emails are not confidential. Always put a topic in the subject line. Answer emails promptly, ideally in the same day or, at the latest, in the next business day.
- ◆ Compose and spell check your message, attach any documents, and fill in the subject line BEFORE you fill in the address line. This way you can ensure you don't send the email until you know it's fully ready.
- ◆ Don't hit “reply all” unless it's necessary. Getting a lot of “thanks” responses is annoying.

# Communication (continued)

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*When to use which form of communication?*

*Certain situations lend themselves best to certain forms of communication. Use the following as a general guide:*

## *Email*

- ◆ Good for introductions and sending information that will be discussed. Indicate that you will follow up by phone.
- ◆ Good for sending meeting agendas and other non-confidential documents.
- ◆ Good for making introductions.
- ◆ NOT GOOD for any sort of confidential communication, sensitive conversations, or anything that you wouldn't want anyone and everyone to see.
- ◆ NOT GOOD if the information being conveyed may be misinterpreted.

## *Phone*

- ◆ Good for conversations that may require clarity or may have a lot of questions.
- ◆ Good for conveying some types of sensitive information.
- ◆ Good for keeping a higher level of personal contact.
- ◆ NOT GOOD if you are making a call with a cell phone and the service is spotty.
- ◆ NOT GOOD if you need to see the other party for full clarity of the conversation.

## *In person*

- ◆ Good for conversations that require clarity or may have a lot of questions.
- ◆ Good for conveying some types of sensitive information.
- ◆ Good if the other person is in close proximity and it just makes sense.
- ◆ NOT GOOD if your communication would interrupt the other party.
- ◆ NOT GOOD if you are upset. Wait until you are calm to have the conversation.

# Greeting Visitors

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*When visitors arrive at the office whoever greets them is the face of the Senator's office. And the first impression. You want to make that a good one.*

Upon arrival:

- ◆ Welcome guests promptly and in a friendly manner. Smile.
- ◆ Ask how you may help them.
- ◆ Offer to take their coat and show them where they may wait for their appointment.
- ◆ Offer a beverage – generally water or coffee. Make sure to serve said beverage with proper accompaniments.
- ◆ Ask if there is anything else you may do for them while they wait.
- ◆ If the wait is lasting longer than expected, give them an update and offer to refresh their beverage.

Upon departure:

- ◆ Retrieve their coat and offer to help them with it.
- ◆ Thank them for coming and wish them a good day.
- ◆ Smile.

# Workplace “Incivility Creep”

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*Today’s work environment is increasingly busier and more stressful. And it can be easy to unintentionally neglect acts of civility. Any of these on their own can be annoying, but combined can quickly add up to an unproductive environment.*

- ◆ Not being prepared
- ◆ Not being on time, not starting meetings on time
- ◆ Not sending meeting agendas in advance
- ◆ Not keeping your phone silent and out of sight during conversations
- ◆ Not returning phone calls/emails
- ◆ Not using your “inside” voice
- ◆ Having conversations near workstations that can be distracting to colleagues
- ◆ Participating in gossip
- ◆ Being judgmental and not open to others’ opinions
- ◆ Displaying disrespectful facial expressions
- ◆ “Forgetting” to cc someone who needs to be in the loop
- ◆ Not sharing credit for success or taking blame for mistakes
- ◆ Interrupting
- ◆ Not greeting people by name
- ◆ Not making or maintain eye contact
- ◆ Not taking pride in your appearance
- ◆ Being unapproachable
- ◆ Reacting negatively under pressure

# Preparing for the Event

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*Much of the success of any endeavor is proper planning. Taking time at the outset to ensure you are ready for your next networking or legislative social event will reap rewards in the long run.*

- ◆ Commit to attending the event. This may seem obvious, but you are more likely to actually go if it's on your calendar.
- ◆ Pay attention to who is hosting and what type of event it is.
- ◆ Do a little research. Who might be at the event that it would benefit you to see? Who might be at the event that it would benefit them to see you.
- ◆ Set goals for the event.
- ◆ What is the attire? Select your ensemble accordingly.
- ◆ Practice your "elevator speech."
- ◆ Think about conversation starters and topics. A good way to stay informed is to keep up with the news.
- ◆ Eat something ahead of time. This way you won't be hungry and can devote your full attention to the purpose of your attending the event. Keep something light like protein bars in your desk so you're always prepared.
- ◆ Have business cards. Keep them in a case, but have a few in your jacket pocket for easy access.

# Executing the Event

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*You have prepared. Your attire is perfect. You have sparkling conversation starters at the ready. Now, it's time. Work the room.*

- ◆ Arrive early. Take a few minutes in your car for last-minute prep.
- ◆ Scan the nametag table for names you recognize.
- ◆ Nametag goes on the upper right lapel.
- ◆ Greet the host. Thank them for having you.
- ◆ Step into the room, move to the right, pause, survey the scene.
- ◆ Acknowledge, but don't hang out with, your friends or colleagues.
- ◆ Approach people alone or in groups of three or more. Someone alone will certainly welcome the conversation. Those talking in pairs might be having a more serious conversation, so do your best to not interrupt. Approach groups of three or more and wait for a break in the conversation. Make eye contact and begin introductions as appropriate. Remember to shake hands or offer an alternative non-contact greeting.
- ◆ Know how to properly introduce yourself.
- ◆ Be ready to engage in substantive conversation.
- ◆ Know how to extract yourself gracefully from conversations. Thank the person for their time, tell them you have enjoyed the conversation, extend your hand for a handshake. The handshake signals both the beginning and the end of a conversation.
- ◆ Ask before exchanging business cards.



# Executing the Event (continued)

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- ◆ Don't graze at the buffet table.
- ◆ Limit yourself to one drink, if you choose to drink at all. And keep your drink half full. If your glass is empty, someone may ask if you'd like another. It's easier to keep your glass partly filled and be able to say you're still enjoying that one.
- ◆ Keep your beverage in your left hand. This leaves your right hand open at all times to initiate or receive a handshake.
- ◆ Make sure your beverage has a cocktail napkin. This will keep your hand dry and prevent it from getting chilled.
- ◆ If you do decide to partake of the food offerings, select something you can eat neatly in one bite.
- ◆ Never have a plate in one hand and beverage in the other. This makes it impossible to shake hands.
- ◆ Thank the host upon departure. No ghosting.

# Homework

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- Practice introductions – self and others – in the mirror until you are comfortable.
- Begin each day with a scan of the news to be informed and have small talk topics at the ready.
- Practice eye contact during conversations. When passing and greeting someone in the hallway, hold eye contact long enough to note the color of their eyes.
- Actively look for examples of “incivility creep” and consider steps you can reasonably take to reverse it.
- Prepare for conversations much as you would a meeting. Afterward, think about how you did. What did you like? What would you do differently? How did the preparation help?
- Work on increasing the personal, genuine touch in your communication. Strive to be clear and concise. Take a look at some exchanges and see what you like. Also, look for things you might change.
- Do a social media audit on yourself. Make sure you are conveying the messages you intend.
- Every day, all day, pay attention to detail.

# Recommended Resources

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*Treating People Well*

by Leah Berman and Jeremy Bernard

*Modern Manners*

by Dorothea Johnson and Liv Tyler

*The Etiquette Advantage in Business*

by Peter Post with Anna Post, Lizzie Post, and Daniel Post Senning

*Emily Post's Etiquette*

by Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning

*Awesome Etiquette*

Podcast by The Emily Post Institute

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