

Cell Phone Etiquette 101

Written by Jianna C. Vasquez
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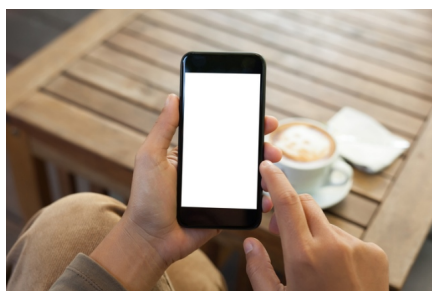


A cell phone is so common nowadays that we often forget the dos and don'ts associated with cell phone useage. We have endless possibilities in our hands; we can play games, send a tweet, or snap a photo in a matter of seconds. With all this new technology, it's often easy to forget that face-to-face interaction is more important than a conversation on a cell phone.

"All in all, a [cell phone] is attempting distraction for many users. Knowing these portable devices have endless features, it's important to resist the urge to disconnect with reality. Although useful and necessary, cellphones don't compete with face-to-face interaction," says etiquette expert and founder of Protocol & Etiquette World Wide, Sharon Schweitzer.

Schweitzer advises and trains motivated individuals in 2,000 global companies and organizations by providing corporate training in business etiquette, international and global protocol. She is also a best-selling and international award-winning author for her book, "Access to Asia: Your Multicultural Business Guide."

Schweitzer has made her career from understanding different cultures and how understanding different cultures plays a role in building a strong international business relationship.



July is National Cell Phone Courtesy Month and, although it is only one month out of the year, users should practice etiquette all year around. In case you don't know exactly what cell phone etiquette is, here are Schweitzer's cell phone 10 tips:

1. Hidden cell phone: Whether you are attending an important business meeting, on a date, or in a casual setting with friends and family, keep your cell phone out of sight. Placing your phone on the table or desk sends the clear message that present company isn't your number-one priority. According to Forbes, 84% of working professionals believe texting or sending email during a formal business meeting is highly unacceptable and rude.
2. Silent smartphone: It's polite and responsible to turn off your cell phone before meetings, meals, and meaningful moments – like dates. If you can't turn your device off, turn it to silent or vibrate. A cell phone is not a replacement for an in-person meeting.
3. Exceptions: There are exceptions to every rule: A) Doctors, nurses, first responders and health providers B) Those expecting emergency calls C) Those who have an infant with a babysitter, or a person with a caregiver D) Those momentarily sharing photos with others E) Those researching an important request, such as directions.
4. Excuse me: If accepting an emergency call, excuse yourself as quietly and calmly as possible from the gathering with an apology. For example, "I apologize, however this is urgent, please excuse me. I will return in a moment."
5. Consider content carefully: With cell phones, spontaneity can be contagious. Remember, once a text, tweet or post is sent, it's live. Sure, you can delete it, but it's out there on the Internet, just waiting to bite you back! According to a YouGov Omnibus survey, 57 percent of Americans regret a text or social media post they've sent. So, use common sense and don't post inappropriate photos, or text while consuming adult beverages. Avoid profanity. Consider these tips when the urge strikes to send a spontaneous message:

?Step away from your phone, take a deep breath, and count to 30 to attempt to dissolve negative emotions toward the receiver

?Ask a friend to advise whether your content is appropriate

?Carefully consider the repercussions - are you making a valid contribution or a faux pas?

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6. Respond promptly: When you miss a call, text, or email, respond in an appropriate and timely manner by apologizing for missing their message. Then respond with substance.

7. 10-foot rule: When making or taking a call, move 10 feet away from others, and the building including windows. No one wants to see you nervously pacing or gesturing during your conversation. Step outside when responding to a call while in a house of worship, medical office, library, theatre, or hospital. Refrain from confidential conversations on planes, trains, and automobiles.

8. Don't talk and drive: Many cities now ban smartphone use while driving. If you must use the phone, drive to a safe area away from traffic. New vehicle technology comes with integrated hands-off, Bluetooth options. If your vehicle has this technology, be attentive to the road and use caution. Safety first!

9. The cellular crutch: Your phone isn't a gadget to turn-to when you are not sure what to do in uncomfortable situations. If you walk into a new office, or a wedding reception and don't know anyone, take time to engage face-to-face. Deferring back to your phone as a crutch will keep you from truly connecting with new people. Practice improving your face-to-face interactions by turning your cell phone off, or leaving it hidden in the car.

10. Focus attention toward other hobbies: We tend to use our phones everywhere- at parties, at work, before we go to sleep. This dramatically impacts how much, or how little, we accomplish daily. Make a conscious effort to focus on projects, without the distraction of constantly checking your phone for email, texts, or surfing the web.

Cell phones are a part of our everyday lives, and are only becoming more of a distraction as our technology evolves. However, just because we have cell phones, it doesn't mean that our manners should be forgotten.

"The frequency of calls as well as the connectivity of cell phones has increased exponentially over the years. It's crucial to understand modern cell phone manners," says Schweitzer. "Although it's tempting to reply to a notification instantly, there's a time and a place for everything."