Etiquette is defined as "the forms, manners and ceremonies established by convention as acceptable or required in social relations, in a profession or in official life." Times change and this affects the guidelines of etiquette. Common sense will typically be your best guide, but it is helpful to have some general ideas regarding dining and business etiquette.

This handout will provide some basic information for your day-to-day experiences. It will be covered in two sections: dining etiquette and business etiquette.

**Dining Etiquette**

It is important to know how to conduct oneself properly at the table. The rules of dining etiquette are fairly straightforward and mostly require common sense.

- **Table Setting:** It can be very confusing to be presented with a variety of eating utensils. Remember the guideline "to start at the outside and work your way in." If you have been given two forks, which are the same size, begin with the fork on the outside. Many restaurants use the same size of fork for both the salad and main course.

- **Napkin:** When dining with others place your napkin on your lap after everyone at your table has been seated. Do not open your napkin in mid-air. As you remove your napkin from the table begin to open below the table level and place on your lap. If you must leave a meal, do so between courses, and place your napkin on your chair or to the left of your plate. When a meal is completed, place your napkin to the right of your plate, never on the plate.

- **Served:** Wait for everyone at your table to be served before beginning to eat. However, if an individual who has not been served encourages you to begin eating, you may do so. Eat slowly while waiting for their food to be served.

- **Soup:** When eating soup, think of making a circle: spoon away from you, bring around to your mouth and back to the bowl. Soup is taken from the side of the soup spoon—it is not inserted into your mouth. Do not slurp or make noises when eating soup.

- **Utensils:** Be careful how you hold your utensils. Many people tend to make a fist around the handle of the utensil – this is the way a young child would grasp a utensil, not an adult. There are two acceptable ways to use the knife and fork: continental fashion and American standard.
  - *Continental fashion*—the diner cuts the food usually one bite at a time and uses the fork in the left hand, tines pointing down, to spear the food and bring it to the mouth.
  - *American standard*—a few bites are cut, the knife is laid across the top of the plate, sharp edge toward you, and the fork is switched to the right hand, if right-handed, tines up to bring the food to the mouth. Do not cut more than two or three bites at a time.

- **Dessert Utensils:** Dessert utensils may be found placed across the top of the place setting. Slide these utensils down for use after the main course is removed (fork to the left and spoon to the right).

- **Passing:** Pass "community food" such as the breadbasket, salt and pepper, and salad dressing to the right. Always pass the salt and pepper together. When passing items such as a creamer, syrup pitcher or gravy boat, pass it with the handle pointing toward the recipient.

- **Seasoning:** Always taste your food first before using any seasonings. Do not assume it needs to be seasoned.

- **Bread:** Bread or rolls should never be eaten whole. Break into smaller, more manageable pieces, buttering only a few bites at a time. Toast and garlic bread however may be eaten as whole pieces since they are usually already buttered. If you are served a piping hot muffin or biscuit, you may break in half crosswise, butter and put back together. However when ready to actually eat, break it into small pieces.

- **Glasses:** A variety of types and sizes of glasses can be used throughout the meal. Remember your items to drink will be located in the area above your knife and spoon. Coffee cups may be located to the right of the knife and spoon.

- **Finished:** When finished with a course, leave your plates in the same position that they were presented to you. In other words, do not push your plates away or stack them.
♦ **Guest:** If you are someone’s guest at a meal, ask the person what he or she recommends. By doing this, you will learn price range guidelines and have an idea of what to order. Usually order an item in the mid price range. Also keep in mind, the person who typically initiates the meal will pay.

There are many things to keep in mind when dining, but as always common sense should be your guide. When dining with a prospective employer remember it may look like lunch or dinner but it’s still business. The way you act during a meal will have an impact on an interviewer’s hiring decision and your future.

**Business Etiquette**

A good point to remember in business etiquette is everyone should be treated with equal courtesy and respect. Times have changed and some of the old standards no longer apply. Secretaries are important people and should never be taken for granted. Treat them courteously in all your transactions. Treat people the way you wish to be treated. Gender no longer needs to be the deciding factor in everyday events. Business etiquette should be a give and take, to help each other when help is needed and have consideration for others. Good manners and business etiquette have always been based on common sense and thoughtfulness.

♦ **Punctuality:** Be on time. No one wants to be kept waiting. If it is an unavoidable delay, try to contact the person. Keep in mind that you never know when you will encounter heavy traffic, wrecks, construction or other delays. Always allow extra time particularly if you are going to an interview. For interviews you should arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview time.

♦ **Greeting:** When meeting someone, rise if you are seated, smile, extend your hand and repeat the other person’s name in your greeting. A good handshake is important. It should be firm and held for three-four seconds. Today, in the business world it is not necessary to wait for a female to initiate the handshake. Females and males should both be ready to initiate the handshake.

♦ **Introductions:** Introducing people is one of the most important acts in business life, yet few people know how to do it. Introduce a younger person to an older person; introduce a non-official person to an official person; and in business introduce the junior to the senior. Be sure to explain who people are and use their full names. Also do not assume that everyone wants to be called by his or her first name, wait until you are told to use a first name.

♦ **Telephone Manners:** Telephone manners are very important. Have a definite purpose for calling someone because telephone calls are an intrusion into their busy day. Identify yourself and speak clearly into the phone. Never chew gum, eat, drink or smoke while using the telephone. If you encounter someone’s voicemail, state your name, organization, reason for calling and slowly give your telephone number. Many people will leave a very good, clear message and then quickly rattle off their phone number. Voicemail is most efficient if you leave a concise but detailed message. Many times the person receiving the call will be able to get the information you need and leave that in their return call or message to you. Use voice mail wisely and efficiently. Always have a concise, professional greeting on your answering machine or voicemail.

♦ **Smoking:** Be aware of smoking policies. You should never smoke during an interview, at a meal or when you are aware that the other person’s pleasure does not include tobacco smoke.

♦ **Office Parties:** Office parties are good opportunities to improve morale and build good will. Keep in mind these are people who see you every day and they will remember a lapse in behavior. Be aware of your alcoholic consumption and do not embarrass yourself. Do not discuss business; this is a social occasion and an opportunity to learn more about your co-workers.

♦ **Cultural Courtesy:** Cultural courtesy is becoming very important as more business is being conducted in foreign countries. Show appreciation and respect for the differences between our country and someone else’s. You should always be aware of these cultural differences in etiquette. Be sensitive to their rules of etiquette. If you are travelling overseas representing an American firm be aware of the customs and culture of the country you are visiting. This can be very important to your business dealings. Research the customs and culture of the country with which you will have business transactions.

♦ **Five Key Words:** Remember five words that are too often neglected in business: Please, Thank You, and Well Done.