

What is Phone Etiquette?

What is phone etiquette, exactly? It's the way in which we conduct ourselves on the phone. Phone manners were once highly regimented, with guide books published each year to educate the public on how best to handle conversations on the phone. Nowadays, things are a little less formal, but phone etiquette remains incredibly important.

You don't get a second chance at a first impression. How you conduct yourself on the phone may be the only insight a caller has about your business, products, and the way your organization operates. With so much on the line, it's no wonder that phone call etiquette has remained so important.

Why Phone Professionalism Matters

Nothing leaves a bad taste in the mouth of potential clients faster than bad phone manners. Callers don't care if you're distracted, overwhelmed with in person customers, or feeling awkward answering the phone. They just want their questions answered and issues resolved as quickly and completely as possible. Failure to deliver proper phone etiquette can set the entire customer interaction off on the wrong foot. Bad manners can send a clear message that your organization simply doesn't care about their customers.

So how do you ensure you're applying modern, professional phone etiquette to this timeless form of communication? In order to ensure you are properly branding your company over the phone and providing exceptional customer service, we've assembled some do's and don'ts in call handling:

Business Phone Etiquette Do's:

1. Introduce yourself. Even in the age of caller ID, it can be jarring to pick up the phone and jump right into a conversation. Customer service phone etiquette should start by reminding the person you're calling who you are and why you're reaching out. They will appreciate the courtesy even if they recognized your name and number when they picked it up.
2. Work from a script. A call script can provide a standard introduction and conversational platform upon which you base all your conversations. While many people imagine that scripted

conversations will feel forced, the exact opposite is often true. Instead of worrying about specific verbiage and how to best serve your callers, you'll instead be ready to communicate and actively listen to the requests of customers.

3. Speak clearly. Enunciation is so important when you don't have body language cues to pick up on. All the very best phone etiquette techniques won't mean a thing if the caller can't hear what you're saying. Be sure to speak carefully and slowly so that the person on the other end of the line can understand you.
4. Listen to requests. When you're busy multitasking, it can be hard to focus on the requirements of the person on the phone. Set other tasks aside as you actively listen to requests from the caller. Ask follow-up questions for clarification and to show that you're engaged in the conversation.
5. Repeat requests back for clarity. Even when you're solely focused on the conversation at hand, miscommunications can happen. Before you jump down the rabbit hole to resolve an issue you're not fully understanding, try repeating the problem back to the caller to make sure you're on the same page. You'd be surprised at how much clarification you can get by quickly checking in to make sure you've fully understood the caller's request.
6. Make the kind of call you'd like to receive. The *Golden Rule* applies to just about everything in life, but this is especially true in the business world. Treat callers the way you like to be treated on the phone. That means making easy, friendly conversation that accomplishes goals for both parties.
7. Leave succinct voicemails. If you get someone's voicemail, leave a message that's short and sweet. Include your contact information and a quick indicator of why you're calling.

Business Phone Etiquette Don'ts:

1. Don't answer the phone too casually in a business setting. A "Hello!" is fine but consider including your name as you pick up a call. State the name of the business when you're answering the phone, too.
2. Don't leave people on hold for a long period of time. If you have to put a person on hold, ask them if it's okay to do so. At times, it may be better to take down the caller's number and ask to call them back later. There's no quicker way to make a person feel unimportant than by placing them on an extended hold!

3. Don't talk with your mouth full. Your mom probably warned you not to do this, and if you're making important calls over your lunch hour, you might be tempted to chat as you chew. Resist the urge! There's nothing worse than someone smacking their lips in your ear.
4. Don't use slang. Unless you know the person on the other end of the line socially, it's best to keep language professional. Swap out "hang on a sec" for "just a moment, please" and you're sure to impress the person on the line – or at least not offend them with your casual vibes.
5. Don't speak too loudly. Depending on the volume in the room you're in, you could be speaking far too loudly when making calls. Adjust your voice to a normal tone and don't be afraid to ask the person you're calling if they can hear you. Nobody likes being shouted at over the phone.
6. Don't lean too heavily on voicemail. Most people hate leaving voicemails. In fact, most people also hate listening back and responding to voicemails, too. Whenever possible, try not to let calls roll to voicemail – while not technically bad phone etiquette, it's annoying for everyone involved and sends a confusing [message about your availability](#).
7. Don't put people on speakerphone – especially if there's a lot going on in the background. While convenient, employing your speakerphone can lower the quality of the call, making it more difficult for callers to understand what you're saying. They may also feel more exposed, not knowing who might be with you listening in to the conversation.