



The Role of Etiquette in Fostering Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

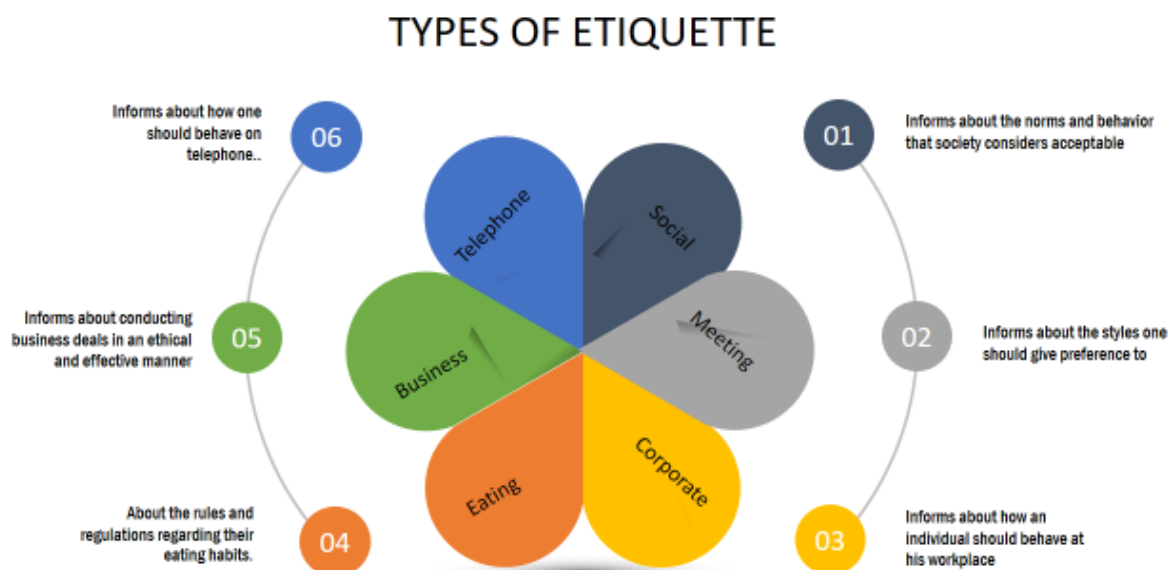
Etiquette at work involves translating good manners into social savvy. It allows individuals to put their best foot forward in dealing with their day-to-day needs and is a necessary aspect of good society. Etiquette includes using people's names, being interested in others, saying hello and thank you, being gracious, not making others uncomfortable, being an observant, being kind and enthusiastic, listening to others, and putting down cell phones during face-to-face meetings. Meeting etiquette involves finding the agenda, not attending meetings without a notepad and pen, keeping mobile phones silent, not attending phone calls unless emergencies occur, and never being late for meetings. By following these etiquette, individuals can contribute to a more harmonious and respectful work environment.

Keywords: Etiquette and its history, Types: Social, Eating, Corporate, Business and Meeting

Very few of us must have ever thought about the origination of the word “etiquette”! Surprisingly, it is originated from the French word “etiquette” which means “ticket” or “label attached to something for identification.” But later in the 16th-century, the French word was borrowed by Spain and altered to “etiqueta” to refer to the written protocols describing orders of precedence and behaviour demanded by the people who appeared in court.

If we look at the backdrop of etiquette historically, we can see that Louis XIV (1638–1715), the king of France, established a set of etiquette norms to strengthen his political position and undermine the French aristocracy, which at the time endangered his position as supreme ruler. So he produced little cards known as “étiquettes” to prompt palace visitors of the rules for suitable behaviour. For example, these cards specified where people were allowed to sit during meals, attire codes etc. These rules for etiquette spread throughout Europe as dignitaries who visited the palace at Versailles became impressed with these social norms.

It can therefore be apprehended from the above discussion that etiquette is the protocols for human behavioural conduct or manners that creates a difference between man as a social animal and other animals. Etiquette is basically about paying some attention to the convenience and comfort of the people that you communicate with. It actually refers to the set of unwritten rules and guidelines that promote professionalism, respect, and effective communication among colleagues.



Let us discuss the above shown etiquette in brief.

1. **Social etiquette** – It is the ability to translate good manners into the social savvy. “Good society is undoubtedly a most desirable accompaniment of the business of life, and with some people it eventakes the place of that business itself; but if the reader imagines that he is to put his book of etiquette into his pocket, and, quitting his old friends and acquaintance with disgust, to push himself into sets for which perhaps his position itself does not qualify him, he is much mistaken as to the object of cultivating the habits of good society.”⁽¹⁾ In other words, etiquette allows us to put our best foot forward in dealing with our day to day needs. It’s a fact that man is not born to live like a bear or a donkey, rather he is born to be social and a communal being to find a true delight in the society.

Remembering, “Once a gentleman always a gentleman,” we carry out some rules even in our most care less or joyous moments, and always try to be recognizable as a gentleman by every act, word, or look of ours. Some of the ways to do that are too simple to adopt and apply. Like:

- Use People’s name
- Be interested in others
- To say Hello and Thank You
- Be gracious
- Not to do anything that makes others feel uncomfortable.
- Be an observant.
- Be kind and enthusiastic.
- Listen others.
- Putting down the cell phones during face-to-face meetings.

2. **Meeting etiquette**- During a meeting, all the employees become an important component on a common platform. It is an occasion where all of them sits together to exchange their views and opinions and reach to a common solution that is acceptable. These etiquettes are the codes and behavioural patterns one should follow during the meeting, conference, seminars etc. There are several meeting etiquettes out of them some are:

- Finding the agenda of the meeting.
- Not to attend meetings without a notepad and pen.
- Keeping the mobile phones on silent mode.
- Not to attend phone calls unless there is an emergency.
- Never be late for the meeting
- Be a good listener
- Not to attend the meeting in casual/informal clothing.

Sometimes it may happen that the meeting goes underway, if people start to go off on some points that are not relevant to the subject of the meeting, or that should be discussed in a different arena, we should bring them back on point. One way to do so is to accept their point and consider it for a future meeting.

3. **Corporate etiquette** -The other name of corporate etiquette is “Business etiquette”. All the corporate etiquette can be applied in meeting etiquette, manner etiquette and appearance etiquette. When people don’t know each other, it is always the first impression that helps them to make judgments/prejudices. Some of the important corporate etiquettes are

- To shake hands with seniors and subordinates as it is the greatest wisdom.
- Left hand should not be used when shaking hand.
- Sunglasses, hats and gloves should not be worn.
- While shaking hand with the opposite gender, both hands usage is not acceptable.⁽²⁾
- It includes bowing and greeting too.
- Master should first greet the guest, subordinate first greets superior, and men first greets women, which is regarded as social morality.
- Extra care should be taken while addressing others.
- The order of the greeting etiquette is subordinate to the superior, the younger generation to elders, men to women and low status to high status.

4. **Eating etiquette**- Obviously, these includes the rules and regulations of eating manners. According to Judith Martin, “The dinner table is the centre for the teaching and practicing not just of table manners but of conversation, consideration, tolerance, family feeling, and just about all the other accomplishments of polite society except the minuet.”

Eating is not only a need it is a custom of sharing our well-being and extending respect and courtesy toward our mates. With our family, friends and business associates dining is a major event that demonstrates our civility and our education.

“Table Manners are as old as human society itself, the reason being that no human society can exist without them. The active sharing of food – not consuming all of the food we find on the spot, but carrying some back home and then doling it systematically out – is believed to lie at the root of what makes us different from animals.”

I think each and every person should follow the eating etiquette as in our country like India, there are certain customs bonded to eating etiquette. One of them is eating our food with right hand and using fingers rather than using sticks to eat. Unlike Western culture, there are no ‘courses’ when it comes to serving food in India. All of the food is served in one go. Following are some of the important Indian eating etiquette we should be aware of

- Washing hands before and after the meal
- Serving all the food items in one go
- Using the right hand to eat and left hand to serve

- Passing the common serving dish to others as “sharing is caring”.
- Taking only as much as we can eat. In India, leaving food is simply considered as disrespect of food.
- To remain seated until all the people accompanying us finish their meal.
- Not to eat the meal very quickly or very slowly but at a medium pace.
- Paying compliments after having the meal.

5. Business etiquette: It's a type of etiquette that deals with a set of some definite rules that govern the way people interact/communicate with one another in business, with customers, suppliers, with internal or external bodies and organizations. It is all about conveying the perfectly right image and behaving in an appropriate way professionally.

Learning business etiquette can transform a person's accomplishment, personality and quality. About business etiquette, Bill Gates once said “enterprise competition is the competition of staff quality”. Though employees are a small part of any enterprise, their functions in the representative and propaganda enterprise image are very large.

Few ground rules on insights into how to bring some consideration, grace and style back into your work life are

- To be punctual at all times.
- To dress properly in neat and ironed clothes.
- Recognition and introduction of team.
- Respect the shared places and be organized.
- Building emotional intelligence to prioritize the work.
- To remain polite and professional at all times.
- Pay attention to names.
- Practice good hygiene.

6. Telephone etiquette

Telephone etiquette refers to the set of social traditions and practices that includes polite and appropriate behaviour while conversing on the telephone. Adhering to proper telephone etiquette is important for maintaining effective communication and fostering positive professional or personal relationships. Being a professional, when speaking on the telephone may appear an easy concept but there is always room for improvement. Whether an individual is a receptionist, work in customer care department, or an executive secretary, or hold some other job title, the following telephone etiquette tips will help you always convey a professional image when speaking to a person. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- To always speak clearly and in a concise way.
- Talk in a gentle and polite manner
- Use of slang language should be avoided.
- Never eat or drink while talking over telephone.
- Listen patiently.
- To focus on the task at hand
- Use of proper titles
- Taking and giving the permission to hold or end the calls.

There are many personalities who have remarked great things about etiquette. One of them is Mark Twain who says, “Etiquette requires us to admire the human race.” It is self-evident that, etiquette is intertwined with the self-confidence and self-esteem of the human race and therefore, etiquette and manners should be considered as the backbone of every communication to succeed. Take a moment and think of other social etiquette practices that show respect for others. There are many things we already do, things we wish and we did, or things we notice other people doing.

Here are a few prompts which may help us to help with our brainstorming:

- What etiquette do we really practice in our home? This could be anything from taking our shoes off when we enter to closing the door behind us when we leave.
- What etiquette do we really practice when interacting with people and places in our neighbourhood?
- What etiquette do we practice at our workplace?

Though answering these questions would be little time taking, but it would surely have a positive impact on our personality. In summary, etiquette is an essential part of our lives, influencing how we interact with others, how we are perceived, and our overall quality of life. By following good etiquette, individuals can contribute to a more respectful, inclusive, and harmonious society while enhancing their personal and professional success.

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