**B U S I N E S S E T I Q U E T T E**

The basis of business etiquette is about building strong relationships in your field by fostering better communication. This can only happen when those you work with feel secure and comfortable. Although basic business etiquette may vary from country to country, some principles stand the test of time and geography.

In the business world, it is best to observe the old rule, «Five minutes early is late».

Allow yourself enough time to arrive promptly, take off your coat, settle in a bit.

Arriving at a meeting exactly at the appointed time can make you feel rushed, and you will look it. Time is a commodity; by being punctual, you show you respect others. While appropriate dress certainly varies from field to field and climate to climate, some things remain the same. Clean, pressed clothing without any loose threads or tags and relatively polished, closed-toe shoes are a must. Look at the people around you for ideas on what sort of clothing is standard. The adage, «Dress for the job you want, not the job you have», is a good rule to follow. When in doubt, ask human resources personnel when you get the job or discreetly ask someone you work with.

**Speak kindly of others**

Taking care to greet your co-workers and remembering to say «please» & «thank you» make a tremendous difference in the way they perceive you. Your good manners show that you acknowledge those around you and are considerate of their presence. Avoid discussing political or religious matters. Keep the conversation focused on noncontroversial topics, so your co-workers find you easy to talk to. That sort of diplomacy is the basic idea of business etiquette.

**Avoid gossip or eavesdropping**

Gossip and eavesdropping are childish behaviors that have no place in the workplace.

If you hear a rumor about someone in the workplace, do not pass it on. People don’t always know or remember who starts a rumor, but they always remember who spreads it.

If you walk into an area, it seems your co-workers don't know you are there, make sure to greet them politely to remove any chance that you accidentally eavesdrop on their conversation.

**Show interest in others**

Showing interest goes beyond business etiquette into general politeness, but it bears repeating: When speaking with someone, show you are truly engaged. Do not play on your phone or computer; if you have to answer a communication say, «Excuse me one moment; I'm so sorry». Maintain friendly eye contact. Listen. People will remember how you make them feel; nobody wants to feel as if they are ignored.

**Watch your body language**

In the Western world, a handshake is still the typical greeting. Say hello with a firm but quick handshake. This handshake is the extent of how much you should ever touch a co-worker – when it doubt, just don’t touch. Hugs or other types of affection that you share with friends and family are out of place in the workplace.

**Introduce yourself & others**

Sometimes you can tell people do not remember your name or position. Introduce yourself quickly. If you are with a co-worker who is new, take the time to introduce him to others. It helps to have a friendly person make you feel comfortable in the office.

**Don’t interrupt others**

When you have a great idea or suddenly remember something important, it can be tempting to blurt it out. Do not do this. Interrupting the person who is speaking sends the message that what she is saying isn't as important as what you have to say. Demonstrating you are an attentive listener is the backbone of diplomacy.

**Mind your mouth**

Using vulgar language is a surefire way to become unpopular in your workplace.

Vulgar language includes swear words & judgmental language. Business etiquette requires being constantly mindful that you are in a diverse environment with people you do not know on a personal level. Speak as though someone from human resources is always listening.

**Consume food & drink correctly**

If you attend an after-hours work event, do not drink too much alcohol. When at work, take care not to bring particularly malodorous foods that everyone in the office can't help but smell. Don't make noises during or after you eat; no one wants to hear that.

At the heart of these 10 basics of business etiquette is diplomacy. Taking care to treat everyone as the valuable people they are says a lot about who you are as a person. That is the kind of care people notice & want to be around. Embrace the basics of business etiquette to become a lasting employee or to advance through the corporate ranks.

Many people assume «etiquette» refers to which fork you use for the salad and how quickly you should send a thank you note after receiving a gift. When it comes to the business world, however, the way you behave says a lot about your professionalism.

Even the tiniest misstep can hurt your career more than you realize. After all, no one wants to work with someone who is rude or inconsiderate. By being conscious of business etiquette, you can help set yourself apart professionally. Here are 10 business etiquette rules you need to be aware of and avoid breaking at all cost:

**Use your full name when introducing yourself**

Let's face it, a lot of people are terrible about putting names to faces. You run into someone you met at a conference last year and it's clear they can't remember what your name is. Introducing yourself with your full name helps distinguish you from the sea of Matts and Lindsays they've met. Knowing your last name also makes it easier for people to find you on sites like LinkedIn so you can stay connected.

**Don't eat at your desk**

Everyone has that one co-worker who brings in their overly pungent leftovers and eats them at their desk, making it hard to concentrate until the odor dissipates. Don't be that guy. Eat your lunch in the break room. Some days it might be difficult to find time in your schedule to get up from your desk, but even if it's only for a few minutes, getting up to eat will be a productivity boosting break.

**Don't just walk into someone's office**

Imagine how you feel when you're buried under work and a co-worker pops into your office. Maybe it's just to ask a simple question, but that momentary distraction completely derails your train of thought and productivity. Don't do that to your co-workers. Even if right now is the perfect moment for you to discuss something, that doesn't mean it is for them. Take the time to send an email to find out when both of you have a few spare minutes.

**Stop crossing & uncrossing your legs**

When you've been sitting for a while, it's natural to get uncomfortable.

However, repeatedly rearranging your legs is distracting. Instead of fidgeting, try to find one comfortable sitting position and stick to it.

**Keep personal items off the table**

Ten years ago, there would have never been purses, wallets, or any other personal item sitting on the table during a meeting or business lunch. Now, none of us can survive unless our cell phones are within arms reach. Keep your cell phone stowed away. Having it out on the table is a sign to those you're with that they don't have your full attention.

**Keep questions to a minimum in meetings**

Meetings are a great time to bring up questions or concerns you might have. Having multiple people there ensures you'll get the right answer. However, if the meeting is running late because of all your inquiries, it's a waste of everyone else's time. Limit yourself to the most important questions during the meeting and then follow up with an email if you still have more after it ends.

**If you did the inviting, you pay**

Nobody like doing that back and forth dance of how-do-we-split-the-check.

Especially when the answer is so simple: if you invited clients or co-workers, you pay the bill. It doesn't matter if it's a business dinner or a quick cup of coffee to catch up, the tab is your responsibility when you invite others somewhere.

**Reply to everyone on emails when it's necessary**

As dangerous as the «reply all» button can be, you need to be in the habit of using it when it comes to sharing important information. For example, say someone sends out a group email asking about some project details. If you respond to just the original sender with the answers, everyone else is out of the loop. Now, either people don't have the information they need or the sender needs to waste time forwarding your email to everyone in the chain.

**Remove people from email threads who don't need to be there**

On the other hand, having your inbox overrun by email chains that are useless and irrelevant to you is annoying. If the email thread gets more specific, remember to remove people who don't need that information.

**Limit your «thanks you»**

There's nothing wrong with showing appreciation, but if you're repetitive with your gratitude it begins to make you seem a little insecure. Instead, one confident and sincere thank you is enough. In the professional world, being polite is about more than minding your P's and Q's. However, if you follow these business etiquette rules, you'll be able to get ahead in your career a lot easier.

**SOME RULES OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE**

When it comes to business etiquette, there are rules that aren’t meant to be broken.

Some of these may seem like common sense, but you would be surprised by how many times you may have made a mistake without even noticing it.

In recent years, companies large and small have embraced a more laid-back startup culture. Cubicles have been knocked down and replaced with open floor plans.

Office furniture can be anything from beanbag chairs and nap pods to foosball tables and arcade games. Suits and ties have been discarded for T-shirts and jeans. Remote work is getting more and more popular. The less rigid office environment may have some feeling like business etiquette rules are antiquated and unnecessary. Don’t throw them in the trash with floppy disks and strict dress codes just yet. Although it may not be obvious, many companies still have implicit professional and social rules of conduct. We’ve put together these business etiquette rules that will help you avoid awkward situations.

**Pay attention to names**

Names are one of the first pieces of information that we learn about someone. It is how people recognize and address you. When you tell others your name, include your last name. This is especially important if you have a common first name like Ashley or John.

When you first meet someone, pay attention to their names. If you aren’t sure how to pronounce it, be sincere and ask. If it is an unusual or difficult to pronounce name, the person is probably used to it and won’t mind. It shows that you have taken an interest in them & care about getting it right. Don’t carelessly butcher their name or invent a nickname.

Call people what they want to be called. Remembering names can be challenging, especially if you meet multiple people at one time. One trick that you can use is to identify a characteristic that helps you differentiate them. Another is to repeat their name and try to use it in your conversation 3 to 4 times, but not so frequently, that it is obvious.

**Greet everyone**

Greeting the people that you meet isn’t only polite but it establishes rapport. You never know who the people that you greeted could be, so it is important to greet everyone with the same degree of kindness. A simple «Hi, how are you?» Or even a smile & nod is enough. However, adding more could make them remember you & view you as friendly & pleasant. It can strike up conversation. Be considerate though. If they appear to be in a rush or not interested now, don’t force a conversation on them.

**Some ways to strike up a conversation could be to**

♦ Compliment something that they are wearing and ask where they found it.

♦ Remark on your surroundings. This can be anything ranging from the weather to a book they are holding or the office space. The key is to ask open-ended questions that will require more than a «yes» or «no» and move the conversation along.

**Offer a handshake & make eye contact**

Handshakes are the universal business greeting. A firm handshake is still considered a positive trait. A weak one is negative. Usually, the higher-ranking person will offer their hand first, but if they don’t, you can still offer yours. Make eye contact when you shake their hand and smile. Those who avert their eyes are viewed as lacking confidence and honesty.

**Give cues that show you’re paying attention**

When someone else is speaking, it is important to nod or smile. This shows that you are engaged and actively listening. It tells them that you care about what they say and value their thoughts. Be careful not to interrupt. If you wish to speak, you may send a nonverbal signal by opening your mouth, but it is polite to wait for them to finish.

**Introduce others**

No one likes to awkwardly stand with a group of people who have no idea who they are and what they are doing there. It’s uncomfortable. If you strike up a conversation with someone & are with a person that they haven’t met yet, it is polite to make an introduction.

Give a little more information than just their name though. You might add the person’s role at your company and what they do. This gives others some background, but keep it brief.

**Send customized, handwritten «thank you notes»**

It’s perfectly fine to send out auto-confirmation and thank you emails after customers make a purchase online. However, a thank you by email ─ especially if it is a large account or long-standing business relationship ─ is considered ingenuine and rude.

Instead, write out a thoughtful thank you and send it by snail mail. It may take a few more minutes of your time and a little change for postage, but it is more appreciated.

**Proofread emails for grammar & typo mistakes**

If you are like most professionals, you will communicate a lot through email. Each message sent reflects on you, so you need to make sure that they are professional and well-written. You shouldn’t have typos in emails. It only takes a few seconds to proofread your emails before hitting send. Technology can even do most of it for you. You can download the grammarly extension free.

It checks your emails for mistakes and offers suggestions to correct mistakes.

**Be polite & professional in all forms of communication**

It doesn’t matter if you are meeting face-to-face, by phone or through email, each interaction needs to be professional. When you communicate through text only, you don’t have the tone of voice, facial expressions and other nonverbal cues that accompany it.

Remember this when writing emails. Keep messages short and to the point, but don’t send anything that you wouldn’t say in-person.

**Always be on time**

Whether it is arriving to work or a meeting or making a deadline, punctuality is critical.

Time is precious. When you miss a deadline, the whole team is affected and may have to cover for you. Teams rely on everyone to do their part. It is easy to underestimate how much time you’ll need to complete a project if you don’t regularly track your work. Know how much time it takes you to complete tasks by using a time-tracking app like Toggl.

When you are late, you are being disrespectful and inconsiderate of another person’s time and commitments. Don’t be late. If you are running behind schedule, contact them as soon as you realize that you won’t make it on time. Don’t show up too early either. Arriving between 5 to 10 minutes before your appointment is ideal.

**Dress appropriately**

Dress codes have become much more relaxed in recent decades.

However, just because there is no rule that says you can’t show up for work in a hoodie, sweatpants and flip flops, it doesn’t mean that you should.

As much as we like to tell ourselves not to «judge a book by its cover», our immediate reaction is to do just that. In fact, studies have shown that the first thing that people notice about others is their appearance. It is the primary influence on first impressions.

You don’t have to put on a three-piece suit, but dressing smart shows that you put effort into your appearance and are more likely to put the same enthusiasm into your work.

When you dress in loungewear in a professional setting, people may think that you are lazy. It doesn't mean that you can’t wear a comfy shirt and jeans occasionally. If it is appropriate for the work environment and situation, then go for it.

**Always practice good hygiene**

No matter what you wear, good hygiene is always a must. Comb your hair. Trim your beard. Clean your fingernails. Make sure your clothes smell good. No one wants to sit next to and work alongside someone who smells like body odor and fried food.

If you invite others to a business lunch, it’s your treat

Lunch meetings give you the opportunity to get to know a colleague better, impress an investor or learn more about a client and their needs. The rule of thumb is that the person who extends the invitation covers the bill. Don’t make a fuss over it.

**Keep your workspace neat**

A desk cluttered with old coffee cups, piles of paper and more post – It notes than free space will distract you and annoy others. If you can’t keep your workspace clean and organized, then how will you manage your work? Colleagues, clients, others will think a question. Your workspace reflects on your professional image as well as on your company, so clean it up. Dust a few times a month, develop a system of organization and promptly discard trash in the bin.

**Table manners matter**

You should be aware of other dining etiquette. Many of the rules that your parents enforced at the dinner table are still in play.

• Don’t talk with your mouth full or chew with it open.

• No elbows on the table.

• Don’t blow your nose with the napkin.

• No texting or playing with your phone at the table.

Eating while talking business can be difficult if you choose a messy item from the menu.

(Stay away from finger foods like oysters & chicken wings.) The rules may change based on where you eat. If you are eating a 5-star, luxury restaurant, you’ll want to know the table placements.

**Show respect for shared areas & items**

Working in an office often means that you are sharing the space with others. Many offices will have a shared kitchen or at least, a company fridge to store lunches, snacks, and drinks. Don’t be the person that steals someone else’s food from the company fridge.

Clean up after yourself. If you use the company printer, stapler or other office supplies, then be respectful. Replenish paper and staples for the next person who uses it.

**Don’t overshare but don’t be too distant either**

Don’t drag your personal life into professional settings. Telling everyone in the office about your cheating boyfriend or your wild, drunken weekend escapades puts others in tense and awkward positions. It’s not appropriate for work either, and those who overshare are often fired for it. People want to know a little bit about you though.

If you don’t share anything, you will come off as snobbish or distant. It is important that you know, which topics are work appropriate and which are not. Talking about the great food and beaches you visited during a recent trip to Thailand may be appropriate. However, sharing that you went skinny-dipping after smoking a huge joint while on vacation there is not.

In general, politics and religion are the two topics considered inappropriate in nearly every professional setting. If you have a personal or medical issue that will affect your work, have a private one-on-one meeting with your manager or boss to let them know.

Don’t be a nosy neighbour. Remember to respect the privacy & personal space of others. You may be comfortable sharing details about yourself, but others may not be.

**Be aware of nonverbal cues**

You might be surprised by how many your facial expressions, body language and hand movements convey to others. Your facial expressions play a huge role in how others perceive you. A recent study by Cornell researchers found that people formed impressions of others based on their facial expressions in photographs. Whether the person in the photo was smiling determined if they viewed their personality as negative or positive. Their first impression from the photo even influenced how they felt about the person after meeting them face-to-face months after. Everything from your posture to your furrowed brow is a form of communication. Stand upright, smile and if necessary, put on your Poker face.

**Be mindful of how others work**

Some people like to work while blasting loud music. Others might need complete silence to focus and concentrate. In one office space, there is a mix of workers with different styles of working. If you like to listen to music, do it through headphones. If you need silence, try headphones with active noise-cancelling technology.

**Use your inside voice**

Some individuals have loud, booming voices that demand to be heard. Sometimes, we get excited in conversation and forget about our inside voices. Either way, it is important to keep sound volume to a decent level. A loud environment distracts and disturbs others.In addition, your office may share a building with several other businesses. They may be holding meetings or trying to work quietly. Be a good neighbour and use your inside voice.

**Put away your phone**

We’ve become so attached to our smartphones, tablets & wearable devices that it can be hard to disconnect. There are times when pulling out your phone is offensive. Texting or surfing the Internet on your phone during a meeting is plain rude. Checking your Facebook feed or Twitter notifications in front of a customer reflects poorly on your company and will likely cause you to lose that customer and your job.It’s impossible to give someone your full attention when you are distracted by your phone, so put it away. Switch it to silent or turn it off completely.

**Don’t be a complainer**

Nobody likes a Negative Nancy. If you notice an issue that should be addressed, don’t simply whine about it. (Of course, if it is an issue that violates workplace policies or moral conduct, you should report it to the appropriate person.) However, if it is anything else, think before you speak. Offer solutions and be careful how you broach the topic. Instead of expressing it as a weakness or a flaw, frame it as an opportunity to improve or an exciting new project. The rules of business etiquette may change based on the location and culture. For example, how you start a meeting in the USA would differ from a Hispanic culture like Colombia. Diving right into business in the USA is not only normal but expected. If you do that in Colombia, it is viewed as rude and inconsiderate, which can negatively affect your business relationships. If your business is global or you travel internationally for work, research the business culture and etiquette. In some cases, people are understanding if you mess up because of a cultural or language barrier. However, showing that you are considerate of their traditions is appreciated.You may not recognize it, but unspoken and implicit business etiquette exists in even the most laid-back company cultures. It can be difficult to figure them out at first, but following these universal rules can prevent you from making an embarrassing mistake.

**E-mail rules**

Think twice before clicking reply all button. Send emails only to those people who are supposed to read it. In another case your message will distract your colleagues and will take extra space in the storage. Always pay attention to your e-mail tone and be careful with exclamation marks.

**Let people know you are running late**

The general rule is two minutes warning for each minute late. It means if you assume you are five minutes late, warn the partner ten minutes before the meeting.

**Stand up when introduced**

You are not supposed to keep sitting when being introduced during the business meeting due to the corporate etiquette. Don’t show yourself as a person with bad manners at the first meeting.

**Handshaking between chief & subordinate**

If you are a higher-ranking person or a host, initiate a handshake, regardless of your gender. In the USA a handshake is a standard of greeting in the business environment, so be sure when shaking hands with both men and women if you want to be taken seriously.

**Don’t put too much perfume**

When going to the office, don’t put too much perfume. Spray it only on pulse points and not on clothes or hair. People working with you should not pay attention to or get distracted by strong smells.

**Don’t pull out chairs for other people**

Unless you’re on a date, of course. However, work etiquette is gender neutral nowadays. That is why you’re not supposed to pull chairs, open doors or help to put off the outwear to your business partner, even if she is a woman.

**Americans say, you really want to be a success as a businessman, promise yourself**:

* to be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind;
* to talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet;
* to make all your colleagues feel that there is something in them;
* to look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true;
* to think only of the best, to work only for the best and expect only the best;
* to forget the mistakes of the past and press on achievements of the future;
* to give much time to improvement of yourself you have no time to criticize others;
* to be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, too happy to permit the presence of trouble;
* to be always in a good mood;
* to be friendly to everybody;
* to learn all your life long;
* to be an inquisitive person.

**Q U E S T I O N S F O R D I S C U S S I O N**

* How do you understand this statement?
* What is the idea…? What does it mean? Do you agree?
* What’s your opinion? What can you say on this idea?
* How do you understand the main idea of the statement?
* Do you agree with it?
* Have you ever tried these ideas in practice?
* What were the results?
* Are these rules proper in our culture?
* How can we use them in foreign business relations?

There are no published rules on what you are expected to do as a new employee. However, to make a smooth start is so important. Americans say that if you don’t know the rules customary for the firm, you should ask; if you can’t ask, you should watch. They say that much responsibility here is to some extend on your shoulders. However, your company’s role is to give you, the new man, adequate information on the company's policies and procedures as well. In spite of all the peculiarities of each company, some general recommendations can be given here:

***They say that first minutes at your new job can have crucial meaning***.

When do people decide whether or not they want to become friends? During their first 4 minutes together. In his book «Contact: The first four minutes» Dr. Leonard Zunin advises anyone interested in starting a new friendship the following: «Every time you meet someone in a social situation, give him your individualized attention for 4 min. A lot of people’s lives would change if they did just that.»

***Note. First impressions count so much. So follow the next recommendations***:

* give personal attention to a man you're talking to;
* be friendly, polite & businesslike;
* use questions to encourage the conversation;
* look interested while you listen.

**Let’s consider some statements**

When you are smiling, the whole world smiles with you. Life is made up not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindness, and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort. Smile a happy smile & life and fortune smiled upon you. You must be all smile.It often prevents a quarrel if you smile at people who are rude to you. You must smile at your own trouble. Fortune will smile you from your birth.

**S T A T E M E N T S F O R D I S C U S S I O N**

Live only for today, & you ruin tomorrow.

All successful business stands on the foundation of morality.

The best investment a young man starting out in business could possibly make is to give all his time, all his energies to work, just plain, hard work.

Don’t learn the tricks of the trade – learn the trade.

If you make a mistake – make a new one each time.

Speak well of your enemies; remember, you made them.

**THE BODY LANGUAGE ETIQUETTE FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS**

The definition of a *mannerism* is a habit, gesture or other speech or dress characteristic that someone does often. The way you talk and gesture are examples of *mannerisms*. In today’s global business environment, you will likely visit foreign countries or build working relationships overseas.

You may work directly with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Even if you work solely in your home country, you may have clients, colleagues, contractors, or suppliers from elsewhere. Improving your level of knowledge of international cultural difference in business can aid in building international competencies as well as enabling you to gain a competitive advantage.

Each of us knows how to use our body parts to send messages but not many of us realise that people in different parts of the world ‘speak’ different body languages. Humans have more than 700,000 forms of body language: facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, greetings and degree of eye contact vary greatly across countries.

Body language training is therefore a great asset to organisations with practical applications to leadership, sales, customer relations, HR and workplace dynamics. When you are doing business with people from different countries and cultures, you should be aware that sometimes you may face some misunderstanding and perhaps feel insulted by someone else’s behaviour. You need to understand that perceived insults are often entirely unintentional. Therefore, while there are some general behaviours to be aware of, not every breach of etiquette will cause deep offense.

Activia Training, a UK corporate training provider, has created an interesting [interactive infographic](https://www.activia.co.uk/interactive/body-language-in-business) that will help you developing awareness of cultural diversity to avoid exposing yourself as a person who may not respect another’s culture and customs.

The guide provides insight on how working and communicating vary across cultures, and explains how your culture and language affects the ways in which you think and respond. Here are some examples of body language to be aware of:

**Eyes**

The degree of eye contact that is considered acceptable varies from country to country. Is it better to look someone in the eye, to hold their gaze, or to keep your eyes averted deferentially? Across Latin America and Africa, extended eye contact is seen as a challenge whereas, in the U.S. and Western Europe, it shows you are taking an interest in what someone is saying & is regarded as a sign of confidence.

**Legs**

Sitting cross-legged is common in North America and some European countries but it is viewed as disrespectful in Asia and the Middle East where one should never show the sole of the shoe to another person. In these cultures, a solid and balanced sitting posture is the prevailing custom.

**Arms & Hands**

While Northern Europeans associate gesturing with insincerity & over-dramatization, some Mediterranean cultures, such as Italy, use their arms freely as a communication tool. Others, like the Japanese, are more reserved and they consider it impolite to gesture with broad movements of the arms. When you exchange business cards in Japan or China, you are not simply exchanging names that are written on small pieces of card.

You are exchanging important human emotions, which can take a business meeting from an ordinary first encounter to a fruitful long-term relationship.

Present your card with two hands: you are humbling yourself and asking the other person to accept your card. Same thing when you accept a business card, you are elevating the other person and showing gratitude for receiving their card.

**Touching & Greetings**

Shaking hands is the most common form of greeting and taking leave in Western cultures. Asians and Middle Easterners prefer a soft handshake, while in Western cultures strong grips are preferred. While shaking hands is slowly gaining acceptance in Asia, many Asians still prefer a different form of greeting: a bow in East Asia or a ***wai*** (joining the two hands together) in some Southern and Southeastern Asian countries.

Remember, 60 to 90 % of our communication with others is nonverbal, which means the body language we use is extremely important. Before traveling to a foreign country for business, it is a very important to read up about the body language etiquette of that culture. In addition, it’s especially important to make a good first impression because within the first few minutes of meeting someone, we are already making decisions about what the other person’s intentions are; whether or not the person is credible & someone we want to do business with.

**APOLOGIES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**

Did you do something wrong? *An apology* might be in order. *An apology* is an expression of sorrow, regret, or remorse. To apologize, you might send the wronged party a letter if you don’t prefer to apologize in person. When you say you’re sorry, the other person may respond best if you choose your words carefully. With that in mind, what is the correct way to express your regrets – my apology or my apologies?*My apology* and my apologies are both correct, but they are used differently in sentences. *My apologies* is a way to say you’re sorry about something. *My apology* is a reference to a previous apology you made. You use *apology* in the plural form to express regret for being unable to do something. This is the context where you use the phrase « *my apologies*». Here are some example sentences:

«Joan made her apologies for the delay and left the room.Please accept my apologies

for not being able to attend your retirement dinner.»

You can also use «my apologies» as a direct substitute for «I’m sorry» .

«My apologies. I seem to have misplaced the book you lent me.»

Does that mean it is wrong to say «*my apology*» ? No, if you are making a verbal or written statement to say you’re sorry, apology might be singular or plural. «*My apology*» would be a personal statement for a specific incident.The public radio station aired *my apology* for the mistake.The public radio station aired the *apologies* of the guilty parties, but the town was still outraged.

*Apology* is a noncount noun if you’re referring to a note of apology or doing something without *apology*.The company sent a letter of *apology* for inconvenience caused by the construction.The toddler trod across my toes *without apology* in her quest to capture the butterfly.If you look at «*my apology*» or«*my apologies*» in a sentence or two, it’s easier to get a sense of how to use the phrases. Here are some examples from books:«Didn’t you know that, Tobias?» «No, I wasn’t aware». He grins. «*My apologies*».«I admitted mistakes I hadn’t made, intentions I’d never had. Whenever she turned cold and hard, I begged her to be good to me again, to forgive me and love me. Sometimes I had the feeling that she hurt herself when she turned cold and rigid. As if what she was yearning for was the warmth of *my apologies*, protestations, and entreaties.

But I should say at once that my defense of mathematics will be a defense of myself, and that *my apology* is bound to be to some extent egotistical.But *my apology* was a thousand *apologies*.To say you’re sorry, you might offer your personal apology.

However, the expression «my apologies» is used specifically to express regret for not being able to do a certain thing. Just remember to keep *apology* singular if you are using it as a noncount noun, as in « letter of apology». A meaningful *apology* is one that communicates what I call the three R's – regret, responsibility, and remedy. A statement of regret for having caused the inconvenience, hurt or damage. Having empathy for the person, you hurt or angered is the most important part of your apology. Saying *you're sorry* is called *apologizing*.

When you apologize, you're telling someone that you're sorry for the hurt you caused, even if you didn't do it on purpose. People who are apologizing might also say that they will try to do better. Sound familiar? If so, you're like lots of kids who sometimes argue with their friends and family members. Let's face it – it's not always easy to get along with [sisters &brothers](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sibling-rivalry.html), [parents](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/parents.html), and friends.

Kids aren't perfect and they sometimes do things that get them into trouble. Saying «I'm sorry» can help.Saying you're sorry is called apologizing. When you apologize, you're telling someone that you're sorry for the hurt you caused, even if you didn't do it on purpose.

People who are apologizing might say that they will try to do better. They might promise to fix or replace what was broken or take back a mean thing they said.

**How does it make you feel?**

When you apologize to someone– really mean it – it's because you have stopped to think about how the person may have felt because of what you did or said. When you stop to think about the other person's feelings, you begin to feel sorry for your behavior. You might even feel embarrassed or ashamed if you did something that you knew was wrong.Even if what happened was an accident or you did something you didn't mean to do, you would probably still feel sorry if you knew the other person's feelings were hurt. After apologizing, you might feel a little better (the other person probably will, too).When you apologize in a caring way, you can feel good because you are trying to make things right again.

**What does an apology sound like?**

There are many ways to apologize. Here are some examples:«I'm sorry about the mean thing I said to you»; «I'm sorry I lost your book»;«I was mad, but I shouldn't have called you a name. I'm sorry»;«I'm sorry I hurt your feelings»; «I'm sorry I yelled at you» .

«I'm really sorry I hit you when I was mad». «That was wrong. I won't do it anymore».

When you apologize to someone, he or she might apologize back to you: «That's OK, I'm sorry, too. I shouldn't have teased you». Then maybe you can both feel friendly again.

**When should you apologize?**

Kids might need to apologize if they hurt or teased someone or lost something that belonged to someone else. They might need to apologize if they broke something (even by accident – oops!), or if they did something they knew was wrong – like telling a lie or breaking a rule on purpose. Maybe they did something their parent told them not to do, or maybe they didn't do something they were supposed to do.Kids might need to apologize to each other or to a grown-up. Grown-ups can apologize, too – to other grown-ups or even to kids. After all, even grown-ups make mistakes sometimes. By apologizing when they're wrong, grown-ups can set a good example& show kids how to do the right thing and apologize when they need to.

**What if you were angry?**

Everyone feels [angry](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/anger.html) with someone else now & then. Being angry is OK – nothing to apologize for – but knowing how to tell someone what made you angry is important.

When little kids are angry, they might hit or kick or scream. They don't have much self-control and they might not have learned yet that it's wrong to hit someone because they're upset.But as kids get bigger &can use words, they know better than to hit or kick or scream when they're angry. They learn to express their feelings with words.

The words they say when they're angry might be stronger or louder than usual – but the words don't have to be mean. You can tell someone you're upset & why without putting that person down. You can be honest about how you feel without being unkind.But sometimes anger takes over &kids might lose self-control. They might say mean things, lose their cool, hit or push someone. Afterward, most kids realize that even if they were right to be angry, it is not OK to behave that way.

**Does apologizing fix everything?**

Saying I'm sorry when you need to is the right thing to do. It does a lot of good. But by itself, it might not be enough to make everything all better again. Sometimes along with an apology, a person needs to fix the mistake or promise to do better. Sometimes doing a nice thing for the person after you apologize helps show that you really are sorry & want to be friendly again.Sometimes a heartfelt « I'm sorry» fixes everything right away. Other times, it might take a while for someone to feel friendly after you apologize.

You might need to give the other person some time. Even after you say you're sorry, you might still feel bad about what you said or did – but you can feel good about apologizing and about making up your mind to do better.

When someone apologizes to you, you might not feel like being friendly again right away. Once in a while, if a person doesn't change, you might not want to be friends anymore.

You might feel relieved and glad that the other person apologized and admitted being wrong. But if someone keeps behaving in mean ways or does something that keeps hurting, you might not feel the same way anymore. Just because someone apologizes to you doesn't mean you have to be friendly again. That part is up to you.

**What is an apology?**

An apology is a statement that has two key elements: It shows your remorse over your actions. It acknowledges the hurt that your actions have caused to someone else.

We all need to learn how to apologize – after all, no one is perfect. We all make mistakes, and we all have the capability to hurt people through our behaviours and actions, whether these are intentional or not. It isn't always easy to apologize, but it's the most effective way to restore trust and balance in a relationship, when you've done something wrong.

There are many reasons why you should make a sincere apology when you've hurt someone unnecessarily, or have made a mistake.

First, an apology opens a dialogue between yourself and the other person.

Your willingness to admit your mistake can give the other person the opportunity he needs to communicate with you, and start dealing with his feelings.

When you apologize, you acknowledge that you engaged in unacceptable behaviour.

This helps you rebuild trust and re-establish your relationship with the other person.

It gives you a chance to discuss what is &isn't acceptable.

What's more, when you admit that the situation was your fault, you restore dignity to the person you hurt. This can begin the healing process, and it can ensure that she doesn't unjustly blame herself for what happened. Last, a sincere apology shows that you're taking responsibility for your actions. This can strengthen your self-confidence, self-respect, and reputation. You're likely to feel a sense of relief when you come clean about your actions, and it's one of the best ways to restore your [*integrity*](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/integrity.htm)*i*n the eyes of others.

What are the consequences if you don't apologize when you've made a mistake?

First, you will damage your relationships with colleagues, clients, friends, or family.

It can harm your reputation, limit your career opportunities, lower your effectiveness – others may not want to work with you. It negatively affects your team when you don't apologize. No one wants to work for a boss who can't own up to his mistakes; who doesn't apologize for them. The animosity, tension, and pain that comes with this can create a toxic work environment.

**Why apologies are difficult**

With all these negative consequences, why do some people still refuse to apologize?

First, apologies take courage. When you admit that you were wrong, it puts you in a vulnerable position, which can open you up to attack or blame. Some people struggle to show this courage. Alternatively, you may be so full of shame and embarrassment over your actions that you can't bring yourself to face the other person. Or, you may be following the advice « never apologize, never explain». It's up to you if you want to be this arrogant, but, if you do, don't expect to be seen as a wise or an inspiring leader.

**How to apologize appropriately**

In an [article](http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A%3A1025068306386) in the Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, psychologists Steven Scher and John Darley present a four-step framework that you can use when you make an apology.

Let's look at each step, below.

**Step 1: Express remorse**

Every apology needs to start with two magic words: «*I'm sorry*» or«*I apologize*».

This is essential because these words express remorse over your actions. For example, you could say:«I'm sorry that I snapped at you yesterday. I feel embarrassed and ashamed by the way I acted». Your words need to be sincere and [*authentic*](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/authenticity.htm). Be honest with yourself, with the other person, about why you want to apologize. Never make an apology when you have ulterior motives, or if you see it as a means to an end. Timeliness is also important here.

Apologize as soon as you realize that you've wronged someone else.

**Step 2: Admit responsibility**

Next, admit responsibility for your actions or behaviour, and acknowledge what you did. Here, you need to [*empathize*](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/EmpathyatWork.htm) with the person you wronged; demonstrate that you understand how you made her feel. Don't make assumptions – instead, simply try to put yourself in that person's shoes & imagine how she felt. For example:«I know that I hurt your feelings yesterday when I snapped at you. I'm sure this embarrassed you, especially since everyone else on the team was there. I was wrong to treat you like that».

**Step 3: Make amends**

When you [*make amend****s***](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/making-amends.htm), you take action to make the situation right. Here are two examples: « If there's anything that I can do to make this up to you, please just ask»;«I realize that I was wrong to doubt your ability to chair our staff meeting. I'd like you to lead the team through tomorrow's meeting to demonstrate your skills». Think carefully about this step.

Token gestures or empty promises will do more harm than good. Because you feel guilty, you might be tempted to give more than what's appropriate – so be proportionate in what you offer.

**Step 4: Promise that it won't happen again**

Your last step is to explain that you won't repeat the action or behaviour.

This step is important because you reassure the other person that you're going to change your behaviour. This helps you [*rebuild trust*](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/building-trust.htm)& repair the relationship. You could say:«From now on, I'm going to manage my stress better, so that I don't snap at you & the rest of the team. I want you to call me out if I do this again». Make sure that you honour this commitment in the days or weeks to come – if you promise to change your behaviour, but don't follow through, others will question your reputation & your trustworthiness. **Tip**:If you're concerned that your words won't come out right when you apologize, write down what you want to say; then [role-play](https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/RolePlaying.htm)  the conversation with a trusted friend or colleague. In addition, keep the following in mind when you apologize.

**Don't offer excuses**

During an apology, many people are tempted to explain their actions. This can be helpful, but explanations can often serve as excuses; these can weaken your apology.

Don't shift part of the blame onto someone or something else in an attempt to reduce responsibility. Here is an example of using excuses in an apology: «I'm sorry that I snapped at you when you came into my office yesterday. I had a lot on my plate; my boss demanded my project report an hour earlier than planned». In this case, you excuse your behaviour because of stress, and you imply that the other person was at fault because he bothered you on a busy day. This makes you look weak.

**TYPES OF INVITATIONS CARDS**

The date is set and now you are tasked with spreading the word about your event.

However, what type of invitation will catch their eye, most importantly, be appropriate for the occasion? We’ve got the inside scoop on four of our best-selling invitations!

**Flat invitations**

These sleek, [open-face invitations](https://www.paperdirect.com/flat-invitations) display information about your event at a glance, making them perfect to hang on a bulletin board or refrigerator. Designs in the invitation margins let the guests know if the party is whimsical or elegant. Choose to coordinate the text font, colour or graphics with the event colours for a personalized touch. These invitations are best for casual weddings, save-the-date notices and special events such as business grand openings, a child’s birthday, baby shower or a potluck dinner party.

**Send & seal fold-up invitations**

If you love the idea of your guests unwrapping your invitation like a little present, a [fold-up style](https://www.paperdirect.com/fold-up-invitations) works well. The all-in-one invitation (no envelope needed!) has space for event details and a tear-off response card, keeping the reply process simple. Our patterned papers make it effortless to coordinate the invitation with a holiday or theme. Try these invitations for events that require an RSVP such as a graduation party, employee appreciation dinner, wedding with reception, catered dinner party or fundraising event.

**Pocket invitations**

When you must impress, elegant [pocket invitations](https://www.paperdirect.com/pocket-invitations) complete with monogrammed seals, gatefolds &colour coordinating ribbons will help you make a statement. These colourful, layered paper invites alert your guests to an upscale event and may or may not include a separate response card, depending on the RSVP method requested (paper, phone or online). Choose these invitations for a formal wedding, rehearsal dinner party, bachelorette party, baby shower, awards ceremony or milestone wedding anniversary celebration.

**Folded invitations**

These classic invitations mirror a greeting card style, with a design, photograph and/or custom wording on the front and details about the event printed inside. If you need to provide extensive information, such as directions to the venue, a menu, a poem, gift registry location list or biography of the guest of honour, [folded invitations](https://www.paperdirect.com/folded-invitations) allow ample room. You can easily tuck inserts inside the fold too! Pick this style of invitation when honouring a special person, when you’d like to include extra information or for a formal event where the invitation might become a keepsake, such as a wedding, milestone birthday or adoption party.

**BUSINESS CARDS**

**Keep this card on your desk at all times!**

**Exchange business cards introducing other people**

Introduce in the correct order: Introduce lower status to higher status.

Introduce younger people to older people. Introduce men to women.

Business cards are the staple of business success.  Nevertheless, I am constantly amazed by how few professionals pay attention to the etiquette of exchanging cards.  These are the very same people who seek information about the rules of networking, making positive first impressions & dressing for success.  You can work the crowd with ease, offer an impressive handshake and dress with finesse, but if you don’t know the fine points of giving and receiving business cards, all the rest can be a waste of time and effort.

Here are 10 basic rules for the profitable & productive exchange of business cards.

♦Never leave your home or office without your cards and plenty of them.  There is nothing more unprofessional than the business person who has to say, «Oh, I’m sorry. I just gave out my last card», or «I’m sorry. I didn’t bring any with me».

♦Keep your cards in a business card case or in something that protects them from wear and tear.  A crumpled business card makes a poor first impression.

♦Know where your business cards are at all times.  The person who has to go through every jacket and pants pocket or every nook and cranny of a briefcase to find those business cards loses credibility immediately.

♦Hand them out with discretion. Those people who believe in doling them out in multiples of 12 send a message that their cards aren’t worth much.

♦Give and receive cards with your right hand–the hand of discretion.  This can make a big difference when doing business internationally.

♦Give the card the person who is receiving it can read it without having to turn it around.

♦Always make a comment about a card when you receive it. Note the logo, the business name or some other piece of information.  This places value on the card.

♦Keep your business cards up to date.  When any of your contact information changes; run, don’t walk, to your nearest printer for new cards. It is substandard business etiquette to hand out cards, on which you have crossed off an old phone number & written in the new one.

♦Don’t write notes to yourself on someone else’s business card during the exchange unless they appear relevant.  If someone asks me to send a copy of my book, *Manners That Sell*, it makes perfect sense to write «Send book» on the back of that card. However, that would not be the time to write «good lead to ABC organization» on the card. I do that later and out of sight.

♦Avoid appearing aggressive with business cards.  Wait to be asked for yours. If that isn’t happening, ask the other person for a card.  Reciprocity generally follows.

Knowing the rules of business card etiquette is just one more way to add the polish that builds profits.A person worth knowing always carries business cards with him or her.

That’s how you put value not just on the card itself, but also on everything it embodies – your profession, company, brand, etc.

**BASIC BUSINESS CARD ETIQUETTE TO REMEMBER**

A business card is a staple of networking & thus, business success. What entrepreneurs and careerist do not understand is it only takes one wrong move to jeopardize one’s professional image.

You only had one shot to make a good first impression, right? Sadly, though, we see many well-dressed people who speak eloquently, highly confident but still leave a bad impression due to poor etiquette. This includes a lack of understanding of how to present a business card properly.

**Rule #1** – Never leave the house or office without your business card.

First things first – always bring copies of your calling card with you, in a box, holder or any container that can protect the cards from wear and tear. You’ll never know when to give one. There is nothing more unprofessional than having to say to the person who asks for it, «Oh sorry, I forgot to bring my card…» or «Sorry, I just handed out the last copy of my card…» This leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Not to mention, a lost opportunity for you. So, make sure you always have them with you. White at it, make sure you invest in quality business cards. This is an extension of your profession and the company you represent. It is only wise to present a business card with a well-thought-out layout, colour scheme, standard fonts. Have as many calling card samples as you can have before printing the final one. Print new copies whenever necessary or when the needs arise (i.e. when you changed your contact info or if new information is available).

**Rule #2** – Keep your business card to yourself.

Your business card is not something you hand to every people you meet on an event.

Don’t think that just because you handed out 100 business cards during an event you will receive 100 calls in a few days. Nope.

Although the goal of networking is to connect with as many people as possible, you still need to identify qualified leads, referral sources or future employers. Simply put, you need to be selective of who you are going to exchange calling cards with. This does not mean that you should only talk and meet people who you think need or will need your products or services in the future. That’s absurd especially during a networking event.

**Rule #3** – Give your business card when a person asks for it

Don’t be too aggressive about the whole process. Wait to be asked for your card. If an individual is interested in connecting with you beyond the event, he or she will ask about ways to contact you. This is the right time to give him or her your business card.

Hand your business card with discretion. Don’t give up to a dozen calling cards. This sends the message that your business card is not worth much as if you are telling the person to give them to others for you. When receiving and giving a business card, use your right hand – the hand of discretion – or both hands. Receive the calling card the way it was presented to you. If the individual is using both hands, receive it with your both hands.There may be **a** slight difference when doing business internationally. In some countries, handing over a card using the left hand is considered a grave insult. **So make sure** you understand the rules or practices of business card exchange first before meeting up people in another region or country. Don’t ever give a business card with your fingers covering the details. Hold at the top corners of the card with the card facing the recipient so that he or she can read it. Look the person in the eye and smile.You may give specific instruction on when is the best time to contact you and how (i.e. phone call, email, or chat) assuming that all numbers and email addresses listed on the card are up-to-date. However, do so politely, without being intrusive or tactless.

Ask for the person’s contact information as well. More likely, you will receive one’s own business card. Reciprocity generally follows.

In case he or she forgot about calling you, you may simply do a follow-up as per your conversation. Just make sure that you are reminding the person of what you have talked about during the event.

**Rule #4** – Treat the business cards professionally.

One proactive way of dealing with this is through writing a note at the back of the card that is if that is the general practice in that area. You may write a note on your card before handing it over as well but ask for the permission of the person first. If he or she says no, then don’t scribble anything on it. Some may say that asking if you may write something in the card is also an indiscreet practice. If you are in this situation, it would be wise to keep an organizer where you can write notes.

Observe how the person treats your or other business cards given to him or her.

If he or she is writing directly on it, you may ask if you can do the same on his or her business card. Don’t assume that other people will welcome the idea, however.If you are writing notes to yourself, the business card is not the appropriate venue to do so. You may only write on the card if what you will write is seemingly relevant. For instance, if the person asks you to send a copy of an e-book, you may simply put "Send e-book" on the back of the card.

**Rule #5** – Make sure your business card is presentable.

Further along; make sure that your business card is not crumpled or dirty in any way.

This makes for a bad impression. Cards should be professional looking. The same applies to giving a card where you crossed off an old contact info and written the new one.

Also, be wary of where you put the box at all times. Otherwise, you will need to rummage through your things just to find it and lose credibility instantly. Don’t place it on your wallet too. It not only will be creased, but also is unsightly to pull out one from your wallet every time a person asks for it. When you receive a card, make a comment about it. Always. Focus on the positives, though, like the logo, business name; other such elements you will see on the card. You may also clarify information detailed on the card. What you will say places value on the card. If you have to put it away, do it gently. Put it inside a cardholder or organizer, and not in your wallet or the back pocket of your handbag. Don’t chuck it on the table or your bag. Place the information in a database. Another etiquette faux pas is the need to ask for the business card of that particular person again.

**Rule #6** – Don’t waste the business cards.

Don’tstash the business cards you have collected at the back of your notebook, not in front of the person most especially. Put them somewhere you can easily access when you need the product or service later. That’s the standard practice. Why collect a business card if you do not intend to make a follow-up? Isn’t it a waste of time & effort on both ends?

The premise is that you need to capitalize on the first meeting & conversation.

After entering the details into a database, you can make a quick call; send an email or a card. Even if you have the person’s calling card, he or she is not yet a part of your network unless you connect with him or her one time or another.

**TYPES OF INVITATIONS**

Different types of invitations can be used for all sorts of events. When deciding on an invitation consider the nature of the event and the potential impact of the invitations on your budget. If your event is a formal one, like a wedding, you will probably want to have the invitations made by a professional. However, for informal events you may want to consider electronic or handwritten invitations.

*Handwritten invitations* are usually sufficient for small, intimate affairs where the guest list is under 50. Examples of this include luncheons, private receptions & small dinner parties. Handwritten invitations take extra time and commitment so they are notbest suited for larger parties.

Hand-write invitations on pretty pieces of stationery or plain white paper. Choose a quote from a famous author or make up your own slogan to add as an introduction into the invite.

Handwritten invitations make for a more personal touch so feel free to add an individual note for each invited guest.Today we send almost everything electronically. The same can be true for invitations.

***Electronic invitations*** save resources such as paper and stamps and provide a quick way to get a message across. These are especially helpful if you are planning an event that is last minute and you do not have time to mail the invitations. Many online sites offer electronic invitations and once you choose one you can enter in several of your contacts at the same time. Once you hit send everyone on the list receives your invitation. Some sites even let you know when your invitation has been read so you are can be sure it reached the guest. Some occasions require formal invitations and a wedding is one of those times.

***Wedding invitations***can be bought in a variety of colours, styles and choices. They range in cost from the conservative to the outrageous depending on your choice of paper and design. Most wedding invitations come with a reply card and a separate mailing envelope. In most cases, wedding invitations are sent through the mail but they can be hand delivered. Wedding invitations include information on where and when the wedding and the reception will be held and include a note to RSVP. You will probably want to send out a party invitation if you are celebrating a birthday, graduation or promotion. Party invitations can be found in numerous varieties ranging from serious and sentimental to funny and cynical. Party invitations can also be handmade. Remember to include when and where the party is located and provide a phone number so your guests can RSVP. If you are planning your party well in advance you may want to mail out your invitations, but if the party is just around the corner consider hand-delivering the party invitations.

**DON’T WORRY** – **JUST SMILE!**

*You don’t speak the language?Don’t worry, just smile! That’s what the experts on communication skills are saying. It’s easy to communicate when you travel abroad. Smile, look at people in a friendly way and point at things and people will understand you. Or will they? People in different countries request things in different ways.*

* The British say *please* and *thank you* more than the Americans. When they buy something the British may say *thank you* two or three times during the conversation. The Americans say’ thank you’ once.
* Americans always reply *You’re welcome* after *Thank you*. The British sometimes reply *Thank you*, or sometimes do not reply.
* In Northern European countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland & Germany), people request things simply and directly and their intonation sounds like an English command.
* In Southern Europe, a smile, friendly body language and eye contact are very important when you’re requesting something.
* In Asia, people sometimes give a very small bow and often look away when requesting something.

**BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN ASIAN COUNTRIES**

During the last four decades, Asia has driven global economic growth. As a result, you have to be culturally in tune with your Asian business counterparts to succeed in the global economy. Only then can you create prosperous and lasting business relationships.

Don’t leave your Asian business relationships to chance or fate. Use these 8 concepts and tips to help improve your business etiquette.

**Know how people make decisions**

In individualist cultures, such as Canada, Great Britain, the USAs, people consider themselves individually responsible when making decisions and deals. Conversely, people in collectivist cultures, which are common in Asia, prefer group representation in meetings and negotiations. In China & Singapore, some will avoid making decisions without group input. **Fast fact**: In Myanmar, people in senior-level positions are not as consensus seeking as leaders in other Southeast Asian cultures.

**Know the power of authority**

In a scriptive cultures, where characteristics such as class, age, gender, and higher education are considered more important than achievement, power often is held over people. In Asia, many countries consider power to be participative. Even higher-ups can only use their authority to guide, not direct, people in gaining consensus on decisions.

**Fast fact**: In Japan, companies are hierarchical. Yet decision making, even within large corporations, is a bottom-up, consensus-building process conducted in steps.

**Know how people view rules & relationships**

In the USA, written rules are sacrosanct; a contract is the relationship. Not so in most Asian cultures, where people see the world holistically, or composed of completely interdependent relationships. **Fast fact**: In China, business agreements may be regarded as merely guidelines. A businessperson there may be surprised by a Westerner’s refusal to renegotiate a price or contract.

**Know how people regard time**

In monochromic Western cultures, time is regarded as linear, or sequential, people do one thing at a time. In polychromic Asian cultures, people typically multitask.

Consequently, interruptions are routine, agendas dispensable, schedules subject to change.

**Fast fact**: In Taiwan, employees average 2,200 hours of work annually – 20 % more than in Japan & the USA. Some Taiwanese companies offer workers noonday «nap time», including dimmed lights and soothing music.

**Know if people communicate directly or indirectly**

The USA is a low-context culture; people are direct communicators, placing emphasis on their words. In business meetings, participants are expected to get to the point and move on. In high-context Asian cultures, communication is indirect. Words can only be understood within the context of the speaker’s body language and facial expressions.

**Fast fact**: When Singapore businesspeople preface a statement with «In my humble opinion», they are actually giving a firm directive.

**Know how formal or informal people tend to be**

According to Michele Gelfand, a University of Maryland psychology professor, tight cultures have deep-seated social norms, showing little tolerance for nonconformist behaviours.

Loose cultures tolerate informalities.

***Fast fact:*** In South Korea, where hierarchy is highly valued, it is important to match the formality, rank, and status of a Korean counterpart in business negotiations.

**Know how much of the workday people actually spend on work**

University of Delaware researchers found that U.S. employees spent 80 % of their workplace time on work-related tasks, 20 % on social activities.

In Asian countries, including India & Malaysia, the split was 50/50, underscoring the importance of relationships in collectivist cultures.

***Fast fact:*** In Malaysia, business guests are expected to recognize and respect the country’s diverse cultures, to accommodate each culture when celebrating, dining, or socializing.

**Know the gender gap in the workplace**

The [Third Billion index](http://www.strategyand.pwc.com/global/home/what-we-think/third_billion), compiled by Strategy, helps gauge how women succeed in the workplace. Composed of myriad indicators that affect women’s economic standing, such as entrepreneurial support and equal pay, the index ranks 128 countries, from Australia & Norway at the top to Yemen at the bottom.

***Fast fact:*** Filipino culture may value machismo, but in business, women are considered equal to men. The Philippines ranks in the top 10 on the World Economic Forum’s [Global Gender Gap Index](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/rankings/) – higher than the USAs, which ranks 20th.  Asked why the East & West think so differently, a Chinese philosopher replied, «Because you had Aristotle and we had Confucius». It’s misguided to assume that Western way of thinking, feeling, behaving are universal. Instead, by being culturally aware and knowing how to build trust and inspire respect, global economic leaders can create enduring business relationships in Asia.