Checklist for Understanding Office Etiquette in Your New Workspace

Starting a new job can feel overwhelming. Whether your role is in person or remote, this checklist will help you understand office etiquette in any setting.

Starting a New In-Person Job

1. Arrive Early and Be Punctual
- Aim to arrive at least 10 minutes before your scheduled start time to settle in calmly.
- Let your manager know in advance if you're running late for meetings or your shift.

2. Dress Appropriately
- Check internal dress code and/or uniform policies and adhere to them in person and on video calls.
- Observe your coworkers' work attire. When in doubt, overdress initially and then adjust as needed. Also, avoid wearing strong colognes or perfumes, especially if your workplace has a scent-free rule.

3. Greet and Communicate Respectfully
- Say "hello" to colleagues. Even a simple greeting fosters trust!
- Practice active listening: Maintain eye contact, use polite language ("please/thank you"), and refrain from using slang or profanity.

4. Email and Messaging Etiquette
- Think before hitting "Reply All", use email for sensitive info and chat for brief updates.
- Match tone and formatting to what's typical in your office and steer clear of emojis or casual punctuation unless appropriate.

5. Respect Personal and Shared Space
- Keep personal phone calls private (e.g., in a break room or hallway).
- Maintain a clean and clutter-free desk, and keep shared areas, such as kitchens or meeting rooms, tidy.

6. Use Headphones and Maintain Quiet
- Ensure your sound can't disturb others and stay alert to people around you.
- Keep phone/tablet notifications silenced during focused tasks and meetings.

7. Lunch and Breaks
- Meals with strong odours are best eaten in break rooms or outside.
- Short personal breaks are fine, and more extended absences should be planned with your manager.

8. Engage in Social Norms
- Participate in team lunches, brief after-work gatherings, and orientation events to foster rapport.
- Steer clear of gossip or personal drama, as these topics tend to cause friction.

9. Learn Processes and Ask Questions
- Familiarize yourself with office processes such as booking rooms, requesting time off, IT support, etc., and don't hesitate to ask if you have questions.
- Asking even "simple" questions shows engagement and helps avoid missteps.

10. Show Gratitude and Respect
- Acknowledge help with genuine "thank yous"; a little courtesy goes a long way!
- Stand when greeting or being introduced to new people.

Carleton University | Career Services

Starting a New Remote or Hybrid Job

1. Set Up a Professional Workspace
- Dedicated area: Have a quiet home office or desk. This signals "work mode" to you and your colleagues.
- Mirror office setup: Ask your employer for key gear (monitor, headset, standing desk) so your home and office setups align.

2. Ensure Tech Reliability
- Stable connectivity: Test your internet, microphone, and camera before making calls; have backups for audio and video.
- Security: Use only approved tools, VPN, and lock your screen during breaks.

3. Be Transparent and Available
- Share location/status: Clearly communicate whether you're working from home or the office and indicate "Do Not Disturb" when you're focused.
- Honour calendar blocks: Schedule work/focus time via calendars so others know when you're offline.

4. Communicate Thoughtfully
- Choose the right channel: Determine when to use email, chat, phone, or video.
- Response expectations: Acknowledge receiving urgent messages promptly.

5. Demonstrate Video Call Etiquette
- Be on camera: Keep your video on for presence and nonverbal cues.
- Framing & noise: Dress professionally (at least the top half!), ensure a tidy background with minimal distractions and noises, and mute when not speaking.

6. Participate and Engage
- Speak thoughtfully: In hybrid calls, speak slowly, pause for remote input, monitor the chat, and acknowledge everyone, both remote and in person.
- Faster connections: Join small-talk channels, virtual coffee breaks, and even quizzes to build rapport!

7. Lean on Onboarding Support
- Buddy or mentor: Pair with an experienced peer in your time zone for regular check-ins.
- Scheduled check-ins: Participate in regular virtual manager check-ins to stay connected and ensure clear expectations are established.

8. Clarify Rules and Boundaries
- Understand norms: Ask about response times, work hours, meeting rooms, and work location expectations early on.
- Avoid an always-on culture: Respect work-life balance! No midnight emails unless essential.

9. Focus on Outcomes
- Track deliverables: Emphasize results over hours logged and use office tools for progress tracking.
- Set realistic deadlines: Communicate proactively if timelines shift.

10. Manage Your Well-being
- Take breaks: Take micro-breaks every hour, move around, and stretch.
- Mental health: Practice mindfulness and check in with yourself or your manager.