

**READ IT FIRST**



# EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE

How to Navigate  
101 Common and Uncommon  
Social Situations

PATRICIA ROSSI

**FOR MY PRINCE, BOBBY:**

*Thank you for the love, laughter, and for being even more than you had promised. This life we're building together goes beyond my wildest dreams.*

**TO OUR PRECIOUS CUBS, JACKSON AND HARRISON:**

*Ron Howard said it best: "You must never at any point in your life ignore the possibility of something extraordinary coming along." Thanks for filling our hearts with "extraordinary," every single day!*

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# One

## INTRODUCING YOURSELF

### What I Learned in the White House

In the late nineties, my husband and I were fortunate to be invited to the White House for a special event in the Oval Office. With fewer than one hundred guests, it was an annual celebration for Italian Americans and featured many famous actors, singers, writers, sports figures, and politicians. As I gazed around the ornate room and explored its vintage artwork and décor, I knew the historic mansion offered so much more to explore.

I walked over to the security woman who had checked us in earlier. I was about to ask her a question when she said, "Ma'am, I want to thank you because you are the only person who spoke to me and asked me how my night was going when I was checking you in for the party." I thought, *I've got to say something funny*, so I said, in my best Southern drawl, "I'm tired of being in there with all those stuffy people [not really]. Is there anything else you can show this girl from Bessemer City, North Carolina, that's interesting and historical?" She immediately smiled, ripped the walkie-talkie from her belt, and said into it, "I'm bringing a guest with me to the such-and-such room."

We ventured down several long corridors until we ended up in a large, beautiful office, a magnificent space. My eyes immediately fell upon the large wooden desk that anchored the room. I had seen this wonderful image in so many photographs through the years. Little John-John Kennedy had hid under and peeked out of this desk in his father's office. I asked the security guard if I could please just touch it. The guard leaned toward me and whispered, "You wanna see something really cool?" She opened the drawer of

the desk and pointed out a crude hole about four inches across. It looked as if it had been dug out with a dull screwdriver blade. Historians believe this hole housed the concealed tape recorder during some Watergate conversations; not very high-tech. It gave me chills. I asked the guard if I could go back and get my husband. I didn't want him to miss a chance to see this piece of history. As we walked back to the party to get him, I realized that the *simple* act of being kind and acknowledging another human being had granted me favor in the White House.

It's so important to address and respect other people in each and every situation. Other people matter. That's the lesson I learned in the hallowed halls of the White House.

*Have you ever been* introduced to someone who wouldn't look you in the eye? Or someone who shook your hand as if you had some sort of contagious disease? When you walked away from those encounters, how did you feel?

If you didn't feel good, you're not alone.

People want to feel that they matter. They want to be known, respected, and remembered. The better you are at making people feel that way, the more likely you are to make a good first impression.

Making people feel acknowledged is not a gift that you have to be born with. It's a skill that can be learned. You don't have to be an extrovert or even a people person to make a favorable first impression. Just review the simple techniques described in this chapter and practice using them as often as you can. Eventually they will become second nature and will easily be incorporated into your everyday life and interactions.

Just a few small changes in how you act can make a big difference.

## THE APPROACH

When you're approaching someone to introduce yourself, walk up, extend your right hand, look the person in the eye, and say, "Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_." It's that simple.

Extending your hand first demonstrates self-confidence and openness, traits that make you seem both likable and competent. Technically, when it comes to workplace introductions, the higher-up should be the first to extend his or her hand. As a practical matter, however, you shouldn't wait too long. If the other person (even the company CEO!) doesn't take the lead, just get your hand out there to avoid an awkward pause. Maybe even the CEO needs a lesson in etiquette!

## PROPER INTRODUCTIONS

Making a proper introduction helps enhance your business sense and can boost your self-confidence. It also demonstrates your insight and respect for others. Remember the old saying: "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression."

Here are some guidelines to follow for a poised and professional image when making introductions.

- ◆ Introduce people in business according to rank, not gender or age. Example: "Dr. Mollie Marti, I would like you to meet Dr. Tom Hanson."
- ◆ Be sure to look at the people you are introducing, starting with the person of greatest importance.
- ◆ Clearly state each person's name to demonstrate professionalism and credibility. Try to provide a bit of information along with their names, as this can serve as a conversation starter.
- ◆ If introducing people of equal rank, start with the older person.
- ◆ In business, the client, guest, or visitor outranks the boss or coworker and should be introduced first.

- ◆ When introducing someone to a family member, you should typically say the other person's name first.
- ◆ In a social situation, men are generally introduced to women. Example: "Melissa, I'd like to introduce Bobby."

## BODY LANGUAGE

With communication in person, body language is even more important than your words. The way you walk, stand, and move tells people a lot about you, whether you're aware of it or not. Every thought or feeling you have about yourself is telegraphed in your body language.

Think about the last party or networking event you attended. How did you decide whom to approach? What helped you figure out whether a particular person was someone you wanted to meet?

Chances are, you observed people's movements, their gestures, and their posture—all of those nonverbal cues we rely on to help us make quick decisions in social situations. At the same time, other people were making similar observations about you. What do you think your body language was telling them?

Here are six simple things you can do to convey both self-confidence and respect for others without saying a word.

- ◆ Stand up straight. When introducing yourself, stand up straight with your shoulders facing the other person. Standing tall and proud sends the message that you are confident, trustworthy, and vibrant, whereas slouching indicates that you're unsure of yourself and uncomfortable with your surroundings.
- ◆ Don't lean on anything. When you lean, you lose 90 percent of your credibility.
- ◆ Place your feet about six to eight inches apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other. This will naturally improve your posture and make you feel steadier on your feet. Your toes should be facing the other person to avoid sending a silent signal that you want to get away. (Be aware that when

you are speaking with someone and their torso and feet are not facing you, it usually means they want to get away.)

- ◆ Stand approximately three feet away from whomever you're speaking with. If you stand too close, you're invading the other person's personal space (remember the "Close Talker" on *Seinfeld*?). On the other hand, if you stand too far away, you may make the other person feel as though you don't really want to be near them.
- ◆ Make eye contact. It shows that you respect yourself and the other person, that you're giving your full attention to the person in front of you. If you're shy or have trouble making eye contact, try to focus on the color of the other person's eyes. If it helps you, pretend that it's your job to find out their eye color. You can also try looking at the person's forehead, right between their eyes.
- ◆ Smile! A smile is contagious and will immediately put the other person at ease. Be careful not to overdo smiling in a professional setting, however, since you don't want to be perceived as frivolous or unintelligent.
- ◆ Don't look over another person's shoulder or around the room. This will make you look easily distracted, or make the other person feel that you are not interested in what they are saying.

## WHAT TO SAY

When introducing yourself in a business arena, always state your first and last name along with your title, remembering to say the client's name first. Example: "Hello, Ms. Goodwin. I'm Kelli Hadd, national VP of sales and training."

## THE HANDSHAKE

A handshake is the only physical contact you're likely to have with someone you've just met, so it's important to get it right. Fortunately, a good handshake isn't complicated.



The correct way to initiate a handshake is to extend your right arm toward the other person with your right thumb pointing up.

Your hands should connect “web to web” (the web is the portion of your hand between your thumb and forefinger).

The connection should be snug, but not uncomfortable, and should be followed by three up-and-down pumps. If the handshake goes beyond three pumps, let the other person end the shake when they want to. As long as the other person is still pumping, it’s important not to yank your hand away even if the other person’s hand is sweaty. Pulling your hand away before the other person is ready will come across as a rejection, and nobody likes to feel rejected.

If you try to initiate a handshake, but the other person doesn’t respond, don’t worry about it. Stay relaxed, lower your hand, maintain eye contact, and continue talking.

Never shake hands while in a seated or subservient position. Stand up, then shake hands; this applies to women as well. If a barrier is between you and the other person, such as a desk or table, then come around from behind the barrier for the handshake, never lean across it.

Although a good handshake is simple, you can easily make a small mistake that conveys a bad impression. Here are a few types of handshakes you should avoid at all costs.

- ◆ The *limp fish*. This is when your hand is limp and feels to the other person as if it has no bones (not a good feeling). Rather than grasping the other person's hand, you're making him or her do all the work. This type of handshake says to the other person, "I'm weak; I don't believe in myself; I'm not a winner." To avoid a limp fish handshake, grasp the other person's hand firmly and maintain a snug connection. If someone gives you a limp fish, try to push your hand in a little closer to get a better connection.
- ◆ The *bone crusher*. The bone crusher is the opposite of the limp fish handshake. It's when you squeeze the other person's hand so firmly that it causes pain or discomfort. This type of handshake tells people that you're anxious and need to dominate others to feel powerful.
- ◆ The *queen's shake*. This is when you hold on to someone's fingertips, instead of making palm-to-palm contact. This type of handshake makes other people feel that you don't want to touch them and conveys an "I'm better than you" attitude.
- ◆ The *wrestler*. The wrestler handshake is when you turn the other person's hand over so that your hand is on top. It is an aggressive and blatant show of power. If someone uses a wrestler shake with you, correct it by taking a two-inch step to the left while gradually returning your hand to a vertical position. This will help restore the balance of power.

- ◆ The *double handshake*. This is when you use two hands. Your right hand grasps the other person's as in a correct handshake, but your left hand is placed on top of theirs. This handshake should only be used in intimate situations, such as to convey condolences. It tells the other person that you're feeling for them, but if used in the wrong situation, it feels insincere and inappropriate.
- ◆ The *fist bump*. This is technically a handshake substitute rather than a type of handshake, but President Barack Obama's use of it has made it acceptable in certain situations. It is most appropriate when used by close friends as a celebratory or congratulatory gesture, so don't try it at your next board meeting, unless the CEO initiates it.

Some germaphobes have begun using the fist bump to avoid handshakes; they believe it to be more sanitary. Since you never know if this is what's going on, if someone initiates a fist bump with you, just go along with it. However, since it is still not generally accepted as an appropriate substitute for a handshake, I recommend against initiating a fist bump in most situations.

One last little tip: if you tend to have sweaty hands, use cornstarch or powder or spray antiperspirant on your hands before social events. This will help keep your palms dry so you can shake hands with confidence.

Also, modern etiquette dictates that in social situations a man or a woman can initiate a handshake. It is no longer customary for an elderly woman to initiate a handshake with a younger woman or a gentleman with a lady. Be mindful, with elderly men or women, it might be wise to pause and let them reach out, as they may have arthritis.

In business, the higher-ranked person should extend their hand, but if they don't, it is wise to go ahead and initiate the handshake.



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