

# 6 Workplace Etiquettes That You Should Follow Every Day

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You probably spend more time with your colleagues than with your family. After some time, your workplace starts to feel like a second home. As such, it's important that a person's place of employment feels safe and comfortable. However, many offices don't feel like, "home sweet home." Why do you think so many encounter inappropriate and uncomfortable behavior in the workplace? What are some of the basic etiquettes that everyone should follow at work? Let's find out.

## 1) Respect your coworkers' privacy and individuality.

Respect is often talked about in vague terms such as, "respect is earned." However, there are a number of simple tips that one can follow in order to foster a respectful environment in the workplace. One very important aspect of respecting your colleagues is not interfering in their personal lives. If they want to tell you something, be a good listener, but don't overstep boundaries by digging into the details of their personal lives. Yes, you can be close friends with your colleague and may want to know if they are facing some problems. But make sure you respect their decision to keep certain things private. Everyone may not be as much of an open book as you are. Along the same lines, if your colleague adheres to different cultures, has a different socio-economic background from yours, or comes from another geographic location, respect such differences and take their lead as to whether they are comfortable discussing those differences with you.

## 2) Keep your emotions in check.

Rightfully so, sexual or racial harassment that create a hostile work environment can be a one-way ticket from the office to the courtroom. Of course, complicated feelings and attractions may arise in the workplace. However, in most instances, it is not appropriate to let these factors impact your conduct at work. Unchecked emotions are often the cause of unprofessional or illegal behavior such as: sending obscene communications, making vulgar comments, stalking, and even assault.

Employees who encounter such troubling behaviors in the workplace should seek the help of a [New York Sexual Harassment Attorney](#). Nobody should be subjected to treatment that leaves them feeling violated or unsafe. As such, it is important to stand strong and make sure that perpetrators of sexual or racial harassment face harsh consequences for their actions.

### 3) Leave unprofessional language at the door.

What you say reflects on you as a person. People often don't realize when they are saying something offensive or hurtful. However, it's important to remember, that you cannot take back your words once you say them. And sometimes, apologizing doesn't help. Therefore, it's always best to be thoughtful and considerate with everything you say. Refrain from using any words or phrases that may hurt the feelings of other employees. What may be a lighthearted comment or joke to you, can be seriously harmful to another person who has a different perspective and life experience.

If your job is important to you, you should always communicate professionally. In doing so, you'll foster a [healthy working environment](#) that makes everyone feel comfortable.

### 4) Know **when** to stand up for yourself and others.

We've all heard the expression, "not every battle is worth fighting." This applies to the workplace as well. In keeping with the theme of the workplace being like a second home, it is important to note that -- just like family -- your coworkers may sometimes annoy you. Unprofessional behaviors are not all created equally, and sometimes the better choice is to deescalate a conflict. When confronted with objectionable statements and/or behaviors of a coworker, take a step back and ask yourself if it is a mere annoyance or truly offensive behavior.

With that said, it's important to know when to stand up for yourself. Know that sexual or racial harassment, discrimination, and retaliation in the workplace are never acceptable. Comments disparaging you or other employees on the basis of, among other things, race, gender, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation should not be tolerated.

### 5) Know **how** to stand up for yourself and others by "going on record."

When confronted with inappropriate behavior in the work place, it's important to report the occurrence to a supervisor or the department tasked with addressing such issues (usually the "Human Resources" or "People Talent" departments). The obvious reason is

that the company will hopefully address your concerns in an appropriate manner. The less obvious, but equally important, reason is that you want to create a clear record of what took place. Further, to have a claim in many instances, it is required that you attempted to seek resolution through the preventative or corrective opportunities provided by your employer. Finally, while a full explanation of the “employment at will” doctrine is beyond the scope of this article, you should know that, generally speaking, unless you have an employment contract or belong to a union that has a collective bargaining agreement with your employer, you are employed “at will,” which means you can be fired or demoted for any reason or no reason at all. You have no right to continued employment or fair treatment by your employer. However, you do have a right to be protected from discrimination and retaliation in the workplace. Thus, if you believe you are being treated unfairly in your workplace because you belong to a “protected category” – e.g., race, gender, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation – then you should go on record with your employer that you are suffering discrimination. In most instances, this will trigger a legal obligation on the part of your employer to investigate and remedy the problem. Moreover, it will place you in a new “protected category” because you have engaged in “protected activity” – i.e., complaining of discrimination -- which means that your employer can’t retaliate against you by firing or demoting you for having registered such a complaint. Effectively, this takes you out of the “employment at will” category and affords you some job protection while your employer is investigating your complaint. For this reason, as well as preserving evidence should you decide to sue your employer, it is very important that you make any workplace complaint of discrimination or retaliation in writing, email being the most convenient and full-proof method of documentation.

If you are going through this process and are uncertain of your rights or what to do, it’s best to seek legal advice. Generally, however, going on record about workplace harassment, discrimination or retaliation is key because it the act of going on record is both a sword (combating unlawful the conduct that has occurred against you) and a shield (protecting you from such conduct in the future).

6) Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

If the correct course of action towards a colleague is ever unclear to you, the “Golden Rule” is usually the safest bet.