

The New Rules of Workplace Success: A Digital Etiquette Guide



Want To Get Ahead at Work?

Mind your digital manners. From email and virtual meeting etiquette to landing a promotion as a remote employee, this digital communication guide will help you stand out in the best way – and accelerate your career growth.

In this eBook, you'll learn:

- Why new technologies demand new communication skills.
- How to master the digital communication tools your job requires.
- The right etiquette for online, email and virtual meeting communications.
- How to win a promotion when you work from home.
- Where to find the help you need to land a great new job.



New Rules for Successful Communication

The digital era has given us a host of new ways to communicate with others. With these new tools have also come new ways to offend or slight others unintentionally or to obscure our meaning.



Despite the complex array of new tools available, however, good communication basics remain the same.

No matter what digital tools you're using to communicate, remember:

- Active listening (or reading) is a must. Really strive to understand what another person is saying before you respond.
- When in doubt, take a moment to think. Many forms of digital communication even let you walk away for a while before you respond.
- Kindness and courtesy go a long way toward building relationships and boosting your professional image.

Why You Need Great Digital Communication Skills

Digital communication is the norm for many jobs, and it's becoming more common. COVID-19 moved many workers into digital environments, where they communicate with their teams via the internet rather than in person.

When you have great digital communication skills:

- You can do your work more efficiently and effectively.
- You build a reputation for being professional, courteous, clear, and organized.
- You can communicate without worrying if your message will be lost or misunderstood.



Mastering Digital Communication

To use digital communication tools effectively, we need to know how to use them in ways that don't detract from the message we're sending. When using any form of digital communication, keep these basic guidelines in mind:

- Explore the tool first, so you have a general idea of how it works.
- Different digital communication channels have different purposes, and they're good for different things. When in doubt, consider an old-fashioned phone call.
- If you're writing a message, read and review it before hitting "send" or "post."
- Always double-check the accuracy of information before you forward it to others in any digital medium.

When you treat digital tools as opportunities to communicate more effectively, you can spot ways to make those tools work for you.



Put Yourself in the Recipient's Shoes

Should you answer that email right now?

Is it a good idea to share an in-joke between you and one work friend to the entire team's Slack channel?

Would a call, video meeting or email be best?

If you're stumped, put yourself in the shoes of those around you. For example:

- If you're supposed to be enjoying movie night with your kids, imagine the conflict you'd feel if your work Inbox kept dinging – or if you were a child, how you'd feel if your parent spent the entire movie night replying to work emails.
- Before you hit “send” on that in-joke, consider how it feels to watch two co-workers giggle over something you're excluded from.
- Do you enjoy reading emails that are hundreds of words long (or longer)? It may be more convenient for you to send an email, but it may be better for the recipient if you take the time to speak over the phone or via video conference.



Master the Tools Your Work Requires

Digital communication tools have proliferated in the last few decades. You don't have to be a master of all of them, but you do need to have a good grasp on the ones your work requires.

When starting a new job or when your team adopts a new tool:

- Spend some time getting to know the unfamiliar app or site.
- Explore menus, read help guides.
- Watch videos on how to use the tools, and so on.

When you know your tools, you can use them to communicate your message, rather than being confused or burdened by them.



Choose the Right Channel

Different digital channels are good – and bad – at different things. When you’re communicating online, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Email is better than text for long explanations or complex discussions, but it’s not as easy to get an immediate answer.
- Text or messaging apps like Slack are good for quick “for your information” info that doesn’t require an immediate or any response.
- Use the channels your team uses. If everyone handles project details in your project management software, don’t expect responses to emails dealing with details of a current project. Put those communications in the project management software.

Finally, remember: If something can be handled efficiently via email, you don’t need an in-person or a virtual meeting.



Avoid the Phub

Ever try to have a conversation, only to realize you're talking to someone who is staring at their phone screen? This phone-engrossed behavior is called a "phub," or "phone snub," and it feels rude because it is.

Whether you're meeting in person or a virtual meeting space, pay attention to the people you're there with. Avoid taking phone calls, having text conversations or doing similar tasks when you're supposed to be focused on those around you.



The Internet Is Forever

“The internet is forever” is a phrase that appears in a lot of courses on netiquette aimed at children, but you never grow out of the value of this lesson.

Treat every communication you make online – via text, email, Slack, social media, virtual meeting, or anything else – as public and permanent. Assume the whole world can look up what you said, and keep in mind:



- Respectful language goes a long way.
- Double-check what you’re sharing before you share it.
- Use privacy filters, like Twitter’s “mute” and “block” functions, to manage relationships.

Email Etiquette

Email has been around for long enough to develop its own set of etiquette rules. Keep these basics in mind to avoid misunderstandings or mishaps:

- Email is a poor choice for sending large files. Use a file-sharing tool like Dropbox instead and email the link, rather than the entire file.
- Think twice before choosing “reply” or “reply all.” If everyone in the thread doesn’t need to see the information, don’t send it to all of them—only email people who need to hear from you.
- If you’re sending a message to a group, use BCC (blind carbon copy) rather than CC (carbon copy) to protect the identities of those receiving your message.
- Respond to emails promptly. Check and reply to emails in the morning, after lunch and before the end of the business day.



Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Virtual meetings have become a way of life for many workers, but no one is born knowing how to conduct themselves in one. Instead, we've all had to learn virtual meeting etiquette.

Some ways to make virtual meetings easier for yourself and your team include:

- Keep yourself on mute unless you're speaking. Background noise can easily drown out team members or distract others.
- Avoid the private chat function in many virtual meeting apps. It's the equivalent of passing notes during a class: It's distracting, and it looks like you don't care.
- Set up and check your camera beforehand, so you know whether people can see you easily and what your background looks like.



How To Land a Promotion as a Virtual Employee

Good electronic etiquette has several benefits – like laying the groundwork for a case that you deserve a promotion.

If you work virtually, it can be hard to get noticed. You'll need to share news of your accomplishments. Here's how:

- Build relationships on your team and with others in your organization, so you're top of mind when someone is needed to fill a role or take on new challenges.
- Express gratitude and share praise where it's due.
- Find a mentor (and use your best etiquette when talking to them).

Track your progress, and don't be afraid to share your accomplishments when they're relevant. They'll help you land a new job!



Finding the Help You Need

Have you polished your online communication skills, built up those around you and collected an impressive list of accomplishments, only to find yourself stuck? If so, it may be time to talk to a recruiter.

Your recruiter can help you by:

- Reviewing your application materials to make sure they highlight your strengths.
- Connecting you to some of the best jobs and employers available.
- Helping you find the opportunities that offer the best fit for your career goals.

While you're sending emails and holding virtual meetings with your newfound online etiquette skills, don't forget to reach out to a staffing firm for a great new job!

