

Transitioning to the Canadian Workplace

What is workplace etiquette

- Workplace etiquette can be defined as the way in which we behave and conduct ourselves in our workplace environment. It is usually unspoken protocol and rules that are in your workplace that everyone abides by. However, it differs depending on industry and workplace. It is best to discuss with your supervisor, manager, and/or colleagues regarding workplace etiquette standards and expectations.

Why does it matter

- Having a sense of awareness towards workplace etiquette can display professionalism and consideration for others at work. It helps develop business relationships and mutual respect. It reduces workplace conflicts and improves communication and your own interpersonal skills.
- Anyone can have difficulty in navigating their workplace environment. It can be different from academic and social environments, because it is unfamiliar territory, and can feel overwhelming at first.
- However, workplace etiquette is universal. Anyone and everyone can benefit from learning some workplace etiquette tips and tricks.
- Workplace etiquette can help you smoothly transition into your new working environment, regardless of your work history. It can contribute to making your workplace an efficient and satisfying place to be.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- Equity
 - Equity is defined as the removal of systematic bias and barriers. This is to ensure all individuals have an equal opportunity to access and benefit from services. In your workplace, there should be policies in place to help support you in areas in which there is a systemic struggle and concern.

- In the workplace, you may need additional support and services to succeed in your work. Discuss and ask questions about what your employer can do so that you can feel supported and have your voice heard. If you need to pursue external support, you can contact the University of Alberta Career Centre.
- Diversity
 - Canada is known for being rich in diversity and having people from all backgrounds. That will translate to your workplace as well. You may be interacting and working with people of different cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds from yourself. Additionally, you may interact and work with people of different ages, genders, sexualities, and abilities from yourself.
 - There are also 'invisible' diversities. There are some differences among yourself and your workplace members that you may not realize. A couple of examples can range from religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and more.
 - As you transition into the workforce, you may learn about the environment of your workplace and its rich diversity. It is often intimidating to first start working in a completely new setting, however, you can learn so much from your workplace. You can celebrate the differences between your supervisor and colleagues and appreciate the similarities. You may realize how it teaches and engages you as an employee and how you also contribute to your workplace as yourself.
- Inclusivity
 - Canada celebrates and supports differences in people's backgrounds, experiences, and identities. This also entails considering how you would want to be treated. The Golden Rule is defined as treating everyone how you would like to be treated. However, the Platinum Rule is defined as treating everyone how they would like to be treated.

- Staying open-minded, respecting differences, and seeking understanding rather than judgment can help you learn a lot about yourself and your workplace.
- An example of inclusion would be how we incorporate pronouns into our day-to-day communication and conversations. You can introduce yourself using your pronouns and also use the correct pronouns for your colleagues. There is also a shift in using gender-neutral language such as referring to a group of people as 'Hey team' or 'Hey folks.'

Workplace environment considerations

- Each workplace has their own do's and don'ts. Canada is a geographically massive country with diverse workplaces and organizations. However, there are some universal aspects to consider for workplace etiquette.
- The workplace environment can depend on the industry, job position, and team you are working with. A bigger organization can have different expectations compared to a smaller organization and a position in a research lab can differ from an office job. It can be difficult to determine what your workplace environment might be, you can talk to your supervisors, colleagues, and peers to discuss overall workplace culture and expectations.

Communication

- A valuable key in having a mutually respectful working relationship between yourself and your colleagues is all within your interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are defined as the connections and interactions between yourself and other individuals. The ability to communicate with yourself, coworkers, and supervisors is a valuable work in progress. When in doubt, ask questions.
- Punctuality
 - Timeliness is essential and necessary. Let your supervisor and team know if you will be running late or sick, or if an emergency comes up.
 - When to respond

- Depending on the workplace, there may be policies and procedures in place. A guideline is to respond as soon as possible. Otherwise, give yourself 1-2 business days or what your workplace prefers.
 - When to expect a response
 - This can depend on the workplace and employer expectations and standards. These can be clarified by your supervisor and colleagues to ensure you understand the expectations of your workplace
 - When to follow up
 - If you find yourself in a situation where you are not receiving a response in an appropriate timely manner, you can follow up with said person or organization you have contacted. However, depending on your workplace standards and expectations it can look different in each workplace.
- Workplace Attire
 - The clothing you wear can depend on your workplace. You can gauge the degree of formality in the dress code by asking and observing the people around you and your supervisors.
 - You can additionally have a conversation with supervisors or managers to manage and understand the expectations for the dress code and see what your preferences are as well.
 - Your workplace clothing can also encompass Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) depending on if you are working in a lab or on-site. Sometimes the standard of how you dress yourself is also related to safety concerns such as wearing a mask, steel-toed shoes, and gloves.
- Workplace Accommodations
 - In certain situations, you may require accommodation or extra assistance at your workplace. In these situations, it is valuable to communicate with your supervisor regarding the assistance that you require or are eligible for. It can range from compensation to Professional Development (PD), parental leave, and learning disabilities accommodations.
 - There are many types of accommodations one can need at their workplace. It is best to share in advance with your employer.

- There are written rules such as legislation that must be followed, therefore your employer has to assist you. There may also be unwritten rules where you may have to talk to your supervisor or colleagues to seek out support and accommodations.
- Virtual communication considerations
 - In this day and age, email and chat platforms are some of the primary forms of digital communication. We use it in work, academics, and our personal lives. In the workplace setting there are expectations to take into consideration.
 - Various types of communication are done online. They are all valuable to utilize. Different organizations may have different platforms they use to communicate. (eg: Office 365, Google Workspace, Zoom)
 - Online chat/messenger
 - Online chatting is the fastest way to communicate and get in touch with someone in the workplace. However, it is primarily used among your working team.
 - Email
 - Emailing can be used on a broad spectrum. It can be used to contact within your workplace team, organization, and other employer organizations. It can be used to arrange meetings and to answer questions or concerns.
 - Video conferencing
 - Video calls are usually planned in advance. It can be used when you would like to have a conversation or have many questions that a typed message or email cannot execute.
 - Greetings and endings
 - The way you start and end an online interaction, primarily emails, should retain a level of formality depending on your working relationship with the recipient.
 - Examples of greetings
 - Hello, Good morning, Good afternoon
 - Examples of endings
 - Best, Best regards, Cheers, All the best, Thank you

- Work from home (WFH) options (if applicable)
 - Work from home (WFH) is defined as working in your primary location of residence. Depending on your workplace, they may have a WFH arrangement or it may be a remote position. Not all organizations have WFH arrangements or offer remote opportunities. Talk to your supervisor about WFH and do not assume WFH will be offered.
 - When you are working remotely or conversing with employees and employer partners virtually, there is a special consideration in understanding that not everyone is working in the same time zone or location. You can be working in Edmonton, Alberta in MST and be talking to a colleague in Ontario whose time is in EST.
 - Different methods of communication
 - There are also different methods of communication when you are not in the office during office hours. Some of these methods do apply to working in person as well. You can send people chat messages, emails, and video call arrangements. Chat is the least formal and quickest option. Emails can be left for more official communication. Lastly, video calls are often for meetings where a lot must be discussed and done. However, a lot depends on your preference and your circumstances. You can discuss your preferences and expectations of both yours and your workplace with your supervisors and come to a mutual understanding and agreement.
- Professional conversation
 - In the workplace, small talk and friendliness are common between oneself and the people in your workplace.
 - Small talk is defined as surface-level verbal interactions. Your workplace interactions do not have to be always related to your work. Small talk can range from commenting and asking about the weather, weekend or vacation plans, to about a recent event. It is nice to engage in small talk conversations as it can give you a break from your work tasks at times.
- Body language
 - Eye contact

- When you are interacting with anyone, it is advised to keep moderate to consistent eye contact with whomever you are interacting with.
- Shaking hands
 - It is common for Canadians to shake hands when they first meet someone. However, this has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and many people no longer shake hands. If you are unsure, you can ask.
- Personal space
 - There should be and it is advised to have moderate space between yourself and the person(s) you are conversing with.

Interactions in the workplace

- Here is a list of examples of professional relationships and guidelines for interactions.
 - Supervisor/Mentor
 - Your supervisor is typically your primary point of contact at your workplace. They are the ones who overlook your job experience and support you. They can also assign you tasks and projects. They will also be the ones primarily responsible for observing your job performance and providing feedback.
 - They are there to answer questions and concerns related to your role.
 - Colleagues
 - Your colleagues are people who work alongside you and with you. Depending on your role and tasks, you may be a part of a team or by yourself. Sometimes your responsibilities may intersect with theirs.
 - They are there to support you through your job term by teamwork and collaboration or moral support.
 - Partners and Collaborators
 - Partners and collaborators are professional partners with your organization and/or team. They are not a part of your direct workplace environment. However, you may be working with them through your term in various

capacities. They are the connections established between your work organization and theirs'. Your interactions with them can reflect on you and your work.