

Etiquette Excerpts - Five Tips for Better Cell Phone Etiquette

If there's a universal area of etiquette ambiguity, it's cell phone use. But, contrary to popular belief, there are some guidelines that will help you appear more civilized.

1. Turn it off - That's right, I said it. Does it really need to be on all the time? Are you SO important? Next time you go for dinner or to a movie, just turn it right off. I'm not talking about putting it on mute or vibrate. I mean, press that big old red button that turns the screen black and put it at the bottom of your purse or pocket. Your date will thank you.

2. Prioritize real people - A real person, that is, one who happens to be standing right in front of you ALWAYS takes priority over a virtual person. If you answer calls, respond to e-mails or send text messages while talking to another human, you are sending a message that they are unimportant to you. And we don't want to do that now, do we?

3. If you must answer... - Okay, I get it. You're so important that there are times you absolutely can't turn off your phone or ignore the beeping. Maybe you're waiting to find out that you've been cast in the latest installment of the Twilight franchise. Or you're about to "bag the elephant" client you've been chasing for months. Just let people know ahead of time. Here's how: "I must apologize in advance. I'm waiting for a really important call and might have to answer my phone during our discussion". Simple!

4. Don't trap people - Unless your house is burning down, please try to limit cell phone use in any place where people cannot escape from your chatter. This includes bank lineups, grounded airplanes, elevators and bathroom stalls. There is nothing more ingratiating than having to listen to someone drone on about their ideas for redecorating the guest room, plans to quit their job and get a better one, or their latest exploits on the local singles scene.

5. Ditch the cute ring tones - Especially if the statute of limitations on your eligibility to join a frat house has expired. This is particularly relevant for employees who are looking to broaden their horizons. Nothing says "I'm not ready to be promoted" like Mr. T's voice blaring every time your phone goes off. Of course, if you're in a meeting, it shouldn't really be on...Refer to point #1.