

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE:

HANDSHAKES



Handshakes are the physical greetings that go along with your words. The handshake developed from greetings in the middle ages. In order to be sure that the person you were meeting was a friend and not an enemy, you checked him for weapons. You held your hand open and so did he; then you shook hands to indicate that you were a friend. Today, we use this same greeting ritual to check whether a new person is open, confident, sincere, and friendly.

YOU ARE JUDGED BY YOUR HANDSHAKE

- Do handshakes matter? YES, if you want to connect with others and make the best possible impression.
- Far more than you may realize, we unconsciously judge others by their handshake. Also, handshaking is a form of non-verbal communication that says SO MUCH about a person.
- An overpowering handshake indicates: dominance, control, egotism and a lack of trustworthiness.
- A weak handshake indicates: insecurity, disinterest, secretiveness, shyness and aloofness.
- An awkward handshake indicates: nervousness or a lack of social skills which in turn reflects on credibility.

WHEN TO SHAKE HANDS

- When meeting someone and when you say good-bye.
- When renewing an acquaintance.
- When someone enters your home or office.
- Upon arrival when you are greeting a host, others you already know, and when being introduced to people.
- When you meet someone you already know outside your work or home.
- When ending a transaction or leaving a business or social event.

COMPONENTS OF A GOOD HANDSHAKE

✓ **INITIATION**

- Shake hands when you start to speak.
- Lean forward ever so slightly.

✓ **GRASP**

- Hold out your right hand, even if you are left-handed. The other person will do the same automatically. It works nearly every time!
- Don't hold out your hand too soon or you will seem nervous.
- If you wait too long, you will seem unfriendly.
- Then you fit your hand into theirs, not too loose, not too tight.
- Don't hold your fingers loose and limp, and don't just take their fingers into your hand. Hold their entire hand, fingers and palm all the way to where your thumbs meet and cross over each other.
- Squeeze firmly, not too hard, and shake once or twice.
- Then let go! That's it!

A proper handshake is done from the elbow not the shoulder. You want to be relaxed enough and not too stiff. The handshake should be firm but not bone-crushing or limp. The handshake is held for 3-4 seconds. You want to avoid holding too long although in some cultures, such as the Middle East, they tend to hold longer.

✓ **MOTION**

- Vigorous up and down movement is uncomfortable so don't distract the person you are meeting, bond with them.
- A jerky motion is a sign of nervousness – don't give this information out, even if it's true.
- 2 or 3 smooth up and downs are plenty.
- The range of motion is 2 or 3 inches.

- If you don't move your hand enough, you may appear to be distant, arrogant or passive.
- If you move your hand too much, you may appear to be over-eager or nervous.

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THE SECOND HANDSHAKE

- Don't pass up the opportunity to shake hands twice in every exchange.
- Shaking hands when you meet is important, but a goodbye handshake is even more effective. Even if the conversation has been awkward or confrontational, a second handshake can communicate that you like the person.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

There are some situations in which shaking hands can be awkward.

- Should you be introduced to someone when your hands are full, carrying files or other packages, don't try to rearrange everything. Simply nod your head as you respond to the introduction.
- If you are having cocktails, hold your drink in your left hand while introductions are going around. Later on, you can switch to your right hand. You don't want to fumble with your drink or offer someone a wet or cold hand to shake!
- If you are wearing gloves as part of formal attire, always remove them before shaking hands (the same goes for wearing gloves outdoors – you should take them off, unless it is bitterly cold weather).

WHEN A PERSON SHAKES EASILY, THEY CREATE A FAVORABLE IMPRESSION.

As an overall part of first impressions, handshakes are important because they are the accepted greeting for both men and women. In both business and social situations, you will need to feel very comfortable shaking hands.

- A firm handshake with good eye contact shows self-confidence.
- The handshake is one simple gesture that says not only, "I'm happy to make your acquaintance" but also "YOU interest ME more than anyone else at this moment." That's a very powerful message and one that shows respect.
- Handshakes also reveal our basic attitude towards ourselves. When we offer a too-strong handshake we are sending the message that we think very highly of ourselves. The opposite is true of too-limp handshakes

TIPS FOR THE PERFECT HANDSHAKE

- If your hands tend to get clammy, try spraying them with anti-perspirant 24 hrs. ahead of time (to take effect). Blot with a cloth (not Kleenex, it sticks to your hands). This works well especially for an important meeting.
- To avoid a wet/cold handshake, always hold your drink in your left hand. Remember that we shake with our...RIGHT hands. This way you won't shock anybody in conversation.

COMMON HANDSHAKES

BRING SOMEONE UP AND DEMONSTRATE EACH HANDSHAKE AS WE GO ALONG.

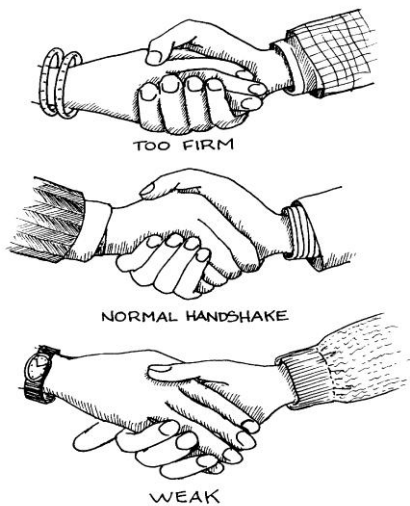
- ✓ **LIMP/WIMPY COLD FISH** - This says, you don't impress me and is frankly not an impressive first greeting. It's also quite boring. How do you correct it? I call it the web to web technique. When this happens to you, try doing a web to web with your hand, and to get the person to lean in gently glide their arm toward yours/pull/slide & release.
- ✓ **THE BONE CRUSHER** - Ouch! Don't hurt me!
- ✓ **THE GRATITUDE HANDSHAKE** - This is when someone shakes with two hands on top of yours, and is often used when a boss or a friend is perhaps trying to express his/ her gratitude for a job well done. It says "you've been wonderful" or "I am grateful for a job well done."
- ✓ **THE SYMPATHY HANDSHAKE** - This expresses deep concern over another's loss and says "I know what you're going through." This handshake is often followed by words and is deeply personal. Both hands are used but should only be used to express a condolence.
- ✓ **THE PUMPER** - This is done like you're pumping water from a well or like you're lifting weights at the gym. Who needs arm weights!
- ✓ **THE GRIPPER** - This occurs when the person shaking your hand simply won't let go.

RECAP

- Not shaking hands is a very clear form of rejection and is very insulting to the other person. In America, it's expected that you will offer a firm (but not bone-crushing) handshake and that you will make eye contact. A firm handshake with good eye contact communicates respect and self-confidence.

Student Handout

**Please see illustration below*



Handshaking is a form of non-verbal communication that says a lot about a person. For example: An overpowering handshake can indicate dominance or control. A weak handshake can indicate insecurity, disinterest, shyness, and aloofness. An awkward handshake indicates nervousness or a lack of social skills, which in turn reflects on credibility.

If you're wearing a name tag, place it on your right shoulder, because that's where a person's eye

naturally wanders when shaking hands.

KNOWING WHEN TO SHAKE HANDS

The answer is, all the time. When in doubt, offer your hand. Shaking hands is appropriate when you're:

- * Renewing an acquaintance.
- * Acknowledging someone who enters your office, cubicle, or home.
- * Greeting a client, new coworker, host, or others you know or are meeting for the first time.
- * Meeting someone you already know outside work or home.
- * Concluding a transaction.
- * Leaving a business or social event.