

10 Tips for Mastering Phone Etiquette

You use the phone everyday in real estate but could you be turning off potential customers with your poor phone etiquette? Follow these basic strategies to make sure your phone behavior is up to par.

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Minimalism advocate D.H. Mondfleur once said, “Cell phones are the latest invention in rudeness.”

In fact, 68 percent of Americans say they observe poor cell phone etiquette—such as with overly loud conversations—at least once every day, according to a national poll from market research group Synovate.

Could you unknowingly be one of these offenders?

Here are some basic cell phone etiquette rules to keep in mind when interacting with colleagues and customers:

1. Remember who you’re working with.

How would you feel if you were having an important conversation with a sales associate, and she broke off the discussion every time her mobile phone buzzed? Your customers are your boss. They want your attention, and you're compensated for the time you spend with them. Block out all other issues while you're working with them and make sure you give them your full, undivided attention during the appointment.

2. Bluetooth headsets are not meant to be permanent.

It's good to use hands-free devices such as Bluetooth headsets, especially when driving or multitasking—but they don't have to be affixed to your head 24/7. If you're showing a property, attending a meeting, or simply having lunch with a client, get rid of the headset! Bluetooth is fine when you're alone in your office or driving in your car, but try to avoid keeping it in your ear all hours of the day.

3. Talk at a normal tone.

Seventy-two percent of people in the above-mentioned Synovate survey said the most annoying cell-phone violation is people who talk too loud. Most cell phones can pick up very quiet noises. Not to mention, most people around you don't want to hear your entire conversation. Some experts suggest a 10-foot zone, meaning you should try to be at least 10 feet away from other people when talking on your cell phone. While this rule may be difficult in some situations, try to practice speaking at a soft and normal tone.

4. Don't forget vibrate or silent modes.

Next to the “loud talker,” the most annoying cell phone habit is a loud, annoying ring, especially when it blares during a meeting or other relatively quiet function. Make it a habit to check your cell phone regularly when entering a meeting or important gathering to make sure your cell phone is either turned off or switched to the vibrate position.

5. Avoid goofy ringtones.

Hearing your favorite song every time your phone rings may seem cute to you, but it could be construed as offensive, obnoxious, or simply unprofessional to others. Stick to generic-sounding ringtones when programming your phone.

6. Don't text and drive.

Chances are that you've passed someone on the highway that is driving and trying to text. Don't be that person! (And don't be near that person, either!) This is dangerous and should be avoided at all times. Plenty of major road accidents involve texting. If you must text in your automobile, do so while your car is parked.

7. Don't reply to a missed call with a text.

In general, if you miss a phone call from someone, avoid responding with a text like, "What did you need?" This rule can be broken in certain situations, however. For example, you might be in a movie where you need to reply with a text indicating you will call back as soon as possible, but do so sparingly.

8. Avoid talking on your cell phone in certain places.

Most people will agree that certain places are off limits to talking on your phone—for example, at the movies, in elevators, while standing in line at the bank, and during a meal at a restaurant. If you have to think twice about whether you should use your cell phone, you probably are not in a good place to be talking on it—so put it away.

9. Don't multitask unless you need to.

We've all done it, but it's bad phone etiquette, and the person you're talking to can tell when you're distracted. Sometimes it's inevitable. But when possible, stop your other tasks, focus, and give the caller your full concentration.

10. Let callers know when you're using your cell phone.

In many circumstances, it's good to remind or inform the other party that you're using your cell phone in case distractions or a disconnection arises. Plus, some information may be confidential, and your client or customer might not want to share sensitive information if she knows you are communicating through a mobile device. When applicable, take the time to let your callers know you are speaking on your cell phone, and if they have any important or confidential information they wish to share, you will call them back from a land line or meet them in person.

In any case, the next time you reach for your smart phone, be sure to remember some of these simple phone etiquette strategies—your customers, and those around you, will be glad you did.