

Rules for the Road: Learn To Act Like a Professional

The way in which you act and present yourself can create lasting impressions that will have an impact on professors, advisors, and others with whom you interact.

Professionalism manifests itself in a number of different ways: the way you speak, your dress, general behavior, your approach to problem-solving and inter-personal relations. Your written communications, phone interactions and live behavior are all judged. Put your best foot forward at all times and remember that follow-up actions speak just as loudly as in-person actions.

Etiquette is not optional – it is expected at all times! People talk and your professional reputation is at stake.

Email:

- **E-mails are a form of professional writing.** Each E-mail that you send represents you and leaves an impression. E-mails are considered writing samples and represent your ability to communicate effectively and in a professional manner. Just because you can send an email quickly, doesn't mean you should write it quickly.
- **Use a professional email address.** kegstandchamp@hotmail.com does not send the right message. Remember to type/sign your name at the bottom of the email, so they know how to address you in response. Your email address may not indicate your first and last name.
- **Respond Promptly.** You should respond to all E-mails within 24 hours. If the email requires an answer that you cannot provide immediately, at least email back saying you will follow-up shortly. This applies to phone calls, too.
- **Do not write in CAPITALS or all lower case.** Your recipient may view capitals as if you were yelling. All lower case sentences are seen as unprofessional.
- **Refrain from abbreviations or emotions.** Your recipient may not know the meaning of BTW or LOL, and generally “smileys” are seen as unprofessional.

Phone and general communication:

- **If you commit, live up to it.** If you make a commitment to a phone call or a meeting, follow-through. Employers (schools) assume that all of your actions are a reflection of how you would act on the job. Even if your commitment is for information only, do not burn bridges – people talk!
- **Create a professional voicemail message.** First impressions make a huge difference and often this is the first interaction someone may have with you. “Dude” or “yo” type language is inappropriate. This also applies when you answer your phone.
- **Always send a thank you note.** It is **expected** that you will follow-up with a thank you note after all requests for recommendations, networking, meetings, and interviews. It is professionally required that you send a thank you to anyone who has taken the time to assist you.
- **Nail the introduction.** If you meet someone in person, look them in the eye, shake hands and introduce yourself, “Hi my name is _____. I am a junior at UNH majoring in Psychology.” If you are calling a contact to schedule a meeting or make a request, introduce yourself and let them know the purpose of the call.
- **If in doubt---turn off your cell phone.** Give the person talking with you your full attention. Do not check messages or answer calls while in a meeting or interview.