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Business Etiquette: Meetings, Meals, and Networking

Business etiquette sounds like an old-fashioned phrase, but in plain language it means something very simple: the small, repeatable behaviours that make other people feel respected, safe, and clear about what happens next when they work with you. It is not about which fork to use at a formal dinner, although meals do come into it. It is about whether you arrive prepared, whether you listen without interrupting, whether you follow through on what you said, and whether people leave an interaction with you thinking, "That person was easy to work with." Employers notice those things because they predict everything else. A person who is careless with introductions, late without warning, or vague about next steps in a small meeting is likely to be the same way with a client, a deadline, or a difficult phone call.

This set helps anyone who works with other people — employees, team leads, freelancers, small business owners, volunteers, and people returning to work after time away. It helps if you are new and unsure what the unspoken rules are. It helps if you have experience but have picked up habits that worked in one workplace and confuse people in another. It also helps if most of your work now happens on video calls and in messages, because etiquette did not disappear when meetings moved online. It changed shape. The camera, the chat box, and the group email thread each carry their own version of the same old questions: Did you show up ready? Did you make room for others? Did you leave things clearer than you found them?

Why does this matter now? Because work is more mixed than it used to be. You may meet a client in person on Monday, join a video call with people in three time zones on Tuesday, and handle a sensitive disagreement entirely by email on Wednesday. Each setting rewards the same core skills — preparation, clarity, courtesy, and follow-through — but punishes sloppiness in different ways. A mumbled introduction is forgotten in a hallway. The same carelessness in a recorded video call or a forwarded email lives on. Learning etiquette as a system, rather than as a list of stiff rules, gives you something you can carry into any room, any call, and any meal: a way of checking yourself before, during, and after you work with people.

A final honest note before the lessons begin. Etiquette is not a performance of being fancy, and it is not a test of background or money. The best business manners are mostly invisible. They look like a short, clear email. They sound like a person who says names correctly and thanks people specifically. They feel like a meeting that starts on time, covers what it promised, and ends with everyone knowing their next step. Anyone can learn that, and this set teaches it step by step, with real situations you can practise this week.

What You Will Learn

- How to prepare for any meeting so you arrive calm, on time, and clear about the purpose.
- How to introduce yourself and other people well, in person and on video.
- How to run and take part in meetings that respect everyone's time and end with clear next steps.

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- How to handle business meals without anxiety — ordering, conversation, devices, and paying.
- How to network in a genuine way: starting conversations, listening, and following up without being pushy.
- How to write short, polite, clear follow-up messages after meetings, meals, and introductions.
- How to repair a mistake — lateness, a missed name, a clumsy comment — calmly and without making it bigger.
- How to adapt the same courtesy to video calls, group chats, and email threads.

Lesson 1 — Before the Meeting: Preparation Is Most of Etiquette

Most etiquette failures happen before anyone sits down. Someone arrives late because they never checked the address. Someone joins a call without the document everyone else is discussing. Someone realises halfway through that they do not actually know why the meeting was called. None of those people meant to be rude. All of them sent the same message: my time mattered more than yours, so I did not prepare. Preparation is the quiet foundation of every other skill in this set, because a prepared person is free to be courteous. An unprepared person spends the whole meeting catching up, interrupting to ask what was already sent, and making decisions they have not thought through.

Preparation starts with purpose. Before any meeting, ask three questions and write the answers down, even if only in a few lines on paper or in your phone. First, why is this meeting happening — what decision, update, or problem needs people together at the same time? Second, what is my part — am I presenting, deciding, advising, or mainly listening and learning? Third, what should exist when the meeting ends that does not exist now — a decision, a date, a list of owners for tasks, an agreement? If you cannot answer the first question, it is polite, not rude, to ask the organiser before the meeting: "So I prepare well, could you share what you would like us to decide on Thursday?" Good organisers are grateful for that question. It often improves the meeting for everyone.

Next comes the practical check. Confirm the time, the place or the link, and how long the meeting is expected to last. If people are in different time zones, write the time with the zone attached — "10:00 a.m. Eastern" — never just "10:00." Check travel time or, for a video call, test your link, camera, and sound ten minutes early the first time you use a new tool. Read any material sent in advance, all of it, and note your questions as you read rather than hoping you will remember them. Bring what your role needs: the figures, the draft, the list. Bringing materials is etiquette because it respects the reason everyone gathered.

Finally, prepare yourself, not just your papers. Decide how you will introduce yourself in one or two sentences if new people are present. Plan your first question or comment so you are not scrambling. Allow a buffer so you arrive a few minutes early rather than exactly on time and flustered. Arriving early is not about impressing anyone. It gives you time to settle, greet people as they arrive, and start the meeting as a host in spirit even when you are not the organiser. In

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business, calm is contagious, and it starts with the people who prepared.

The Steps

1. When a meeting invitation arrives, read it fully before accepting. Note the purpose, the organiser, and who else is invited.
2. If the purpose is unclear, ask the organiser one short question about what should be decided or achieved.
3. Write down your role and your one or two key points or questions before the day of the meeting.
4. Read all advance material completely. Mark anything you do not understand so you can ask about it in the meeting instead of pretending.
5. Confirm time, time zone, place or link, and expected length. Put travel or setup time in your calendar as well as the meeting itself.
6. The day before, lay out or test what you need: documents, laptop, charger, notebook, and for video calls, the link, camera, and sound.
7. Aim to arrive or join five minutes early. Use those minutes to greet people and settle, not to finish other work.

A Worked Example

Andre is a junior analyst invited to a Thursday meeting with a client team he has never met. The invitation says only "Project review." On Tuesday he writes to the organiser, his manager Lena: "So I bring the right material Thursday, are we reviewing the spring figures, or deciding the autumn plan?" Lena replies that it is the spring figures, and that the client will ask about one late delivery. Andre reads the figures pack that evening, finds the late delivery, and writes down what happened and what his team changed afterwards. On Thursday he joins the video call six minutes early, greets the client lead by name, and when the late delivery comes up he answers calmly with facts instead of surprise. After the meeting Lena tells him the client commented on how prepared he was. Andre did nothing dramatic. He asked one question two days early, read the pack, and arrived settled — and that was the whole difference.

Common Mistakes

- **Accepting every invitation without reading it.** You end up in the wrong room, on the wrong call, or unprepared for the one meeting that mattered that week.
- **Assuming the purpose is obvious.** "Project review" can mean five different things. Guessing wastes everyone's time, including yours.
- **Reading advance material during the meeting.** Everyone can tell. It also means your questions come too late to shape the discussion.
- **Planning to arrive exactly on time.** One delayed train or one forgotten password makes you late. A small buffer is basic courtesy.
- **Preparing papers but not yourself.** Knowing the figures but freezing when asked to introduce yourself still leaves a shaky first impression. Prepare both.

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Lesson 2 — In the Room: Introductions, Listening, and Taking Part Well

A meeting is a small society with a short life. In its first two minutes, people quietly decide whether it will be orderly or chaotic, whether everyone will be heard, and whether the time will be well spent. Etiquette in the room is mostly about helping those first minutes go well and then keeping faith with them. That starts with introductions. When you meet someone new, say your name clearly, say it once more if the room is noisy, and add one short line about your role: "I'm Priya Shah, I look after scheduling for the team." A role line gives the other person a hook to remember you by and a reason to talk to you later. When you introduce two other people, give each person the same gift: name, role, and one connecting fact. "Tom, this is Grace Okafor, who runs our training sessions. Grace, Tom Alvarez leads the support desk — you two share the new-starter problem from opposite ends." That kind of introduction starts a real conversation instead of leaving two strangers to flounder.

Names deserve care. If you did not catch a name, ask at once, while asking is easy: "I'm sorry, say your name once more for me?" Nobody is offended by being asked early. People are quietly hurt when someone guesses wrong for an hour or avoids using their name at all because they forgot it in the first minute. If you mispronounce a name and are corrected, repeat the correct version once, thank the person, and move on without a long apology. The correction was information, not an accusation.

Listening is the centre of meeting etiquette, and it is harder than it sounds. Real listening means your attention is on the speaker, not on rehearsing your reply. Practical signs of it are simple: look at the speaker or the camera, do not check your phone, let people finish, and when you respond, respond to what was actually said. A useful habit is the short echo before your own point: "So the concern is the delivery date, not the price — have I got that right?" That one sentence prevents half of all meeting arguments, because many disagreements are really two people answering different questions. Taking part well also means managing your share of the air. Speak up when you have knowledge the room needs; staying silent when you hold the key fact is not politeness, it is a cost to everyone. But speak in complete, short points, then stop and let others in. If you notice you have spoken three times while a colleague has not spoken once, you can open the door without putting them on the spot: "I'd value the scheduling view on this before we decide." On video calls the same rules apply with small adjustments: mute when you are not speaking, raise a hand or use the chat instead of talking over someone, and say your name before speaking in large calls where not everyone can see who is talking.

Disagreement belongs in meetings, and etiquette does not ask you to avoid it. It asks you to disagree with ideas, not people, and to do it with evidence. "I see it differently — the March figures show returns rising when we shortened the trial" is a contribution. "That will never work" is a door slammed. If a meeting turns tense, naming the shared goal helps: "We both need this launch to hold its date — let's look at what has to give." You will be remembered, favourably, as the person who lowered the temperature while still telling the truth.

The Steps

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1. Introduce yourself with your name and one short role line. Speak clearly and a little more slowly than feels natural.

2. When introducing others, give name, role, and one connecting fact for each person.

3. If you miss a name, ask immediately. If you are corrected on pronunciation, repeat it correctly, thank them, and continue.

4. Listen without interrupting. Put your phone face down and out of reach for the length of the meeting.

5. Before making your point, briefly echo the last speaker's point to confirm you understood it.

6. Keep contributions short and complete. Make your point, give your reason, then stop.

7. Disagree with ideas using evidence. Name the shared goal when discussion gets tense.

8. On video, mute when not speaking, use hand-raise or chat instead of interrupting, and state your name in large calls.

A Worked Example

Grace runs a monthly training session for new starters. At one session she introduces Tom, a support lead visiting for the first time, with only his name — "Everyone, this is Tom" — and watches him sit silently for forty minutes because nobody knows why he is there or what he knows. The next month she does it properly: "This is Tom Alvarez, who leads the support desk. When new starters struggle in week one, Tom's team hears about it first, so he can tell us what training actually needs to fix." Three people ask Tom questions in the first ten minutes, and his point about password-reset calls leads to a new training module. In the same session, Grace notices herself about to interrupt a quiet starter, Aisha, and instead lets her finish a long, careful sentence — which turns out to contain the best suggestion of the day, a buddy system for the first week. Grace later writes both lessons in her notebook: introduce people with a reason to talk, and let sentences end before you judge them.

Common Mistakes

- **Introducing people by name only.** A name without a role or connection leaves strangers stranded next to each other.
- **Avoiding a name you forgot instead of asking.** The gap grows more awkward every minute. Ask early; it takes five seconds.
- **Interrupting to show you already know.** Even when you do know, the interruption tells the room your speaking matters more than their finishing.
- **Dominating or disappearing.** Both are failures of judgement about your share of the air. Aim for contribution, not performance or absence.
- **Checking a phone "just for a second."** Everyone notices, and the speaker reads it as a verdict on their worth. There is no invisible way to do it.
- **Making disagreement personal.** Attacking the person instead of testing the idea teaches everyone to stop bringing you honest views.

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Lesson 3 — Ending Well: Decisions, Notes, and Follow-Through

Meetings are judged afterwards, by what actually happens. A friendly meeting that produces no decision, no record, and no follow-through was not a good meeting; it was a pleasant waste of several people's hour. Ending well is an etiquette skill because it protects other people's work after the room empties. The last five minutes of any meeting should answer three questions out loud: What did we decide? Who is doing what, by when? When will we next check? If you are the organiser, it is your job to make those answers explicit, even — especially — when the discussion was messy. If you are a participant and the meeting is drifting to a close without them, asking is a service, not a challenge: "Before we go, can we confirm who is sending the draft, and by which day?" Rooms are grateful for that question far more often than they resent it.

Notes are the memory of the meeting, and they follow simple rules. Write them the same day, while names and numbers are still accurate. Keep them short: decisions, actions with owners and dates, and anything deliberately left undecided. Send them to everyone who was there, plus anyone who needs to act on them, within one working day. A note that arrives a week later is archaeology, not communication. If a note records something you are unsure about, mark it as needing confirmation rather than presenting a guess as a decision — a wrong record is worse than a late question, because people build work on records.

Follow-through is where reputations are actually made. When you accept an action in a meeting, you have made a promise in front of witnesses, and the etiquette is absolute: do it by the date, or warn people early if the date is slipping. Early warning is respectable. Silence followed by a missed deadline is not, because it steals other people's chance to adjust their own plans. If you discover you cannot do what you promised at all, say so as soon as you know, explain briefly, and help find another route — offer the work you have done so far, suggest who might take it on, or propose a smaller version you can deliver. People forgive changed plans communicated early. They do not forgive surprises.

Closing courtesies matter too, small as they seem. Thank the organiser and anyone who presented, specifically where you can: "Thanks for the clear figures, Andre — the delivery breakdown answered my question." Thank people for decisions that were hard, not just outcomes that pleased you. If you invited guests from outside your organisation, walk them out or stay on the call until they have left comfortably; a guest left staring at a closing screen or wandering a strange building remembers it. And if the meeting ran over time, acknowledge the cost when it was yours to control. A plain "I kept you ten minutes over — I will plan tighter next time" costs nothing and buys real goodwill.

The Steps

1. Reserve the last five minutes of every meeting you lead for decisions, owners, and dates — said out loud, not assumed.
2. If you are a participant and no summary is happening, ask for one politely before people leave.
3. Write your notes the same day: decisions, actions with named owners and dates, and open questions.

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4. Send notes within one working day to attendees and to anyone who must act on them.

5. Put every action you accepted into your own task list or calendar immediately, with its date.

6. If a date will slip, warn the people affected as early as you know — never let a deadline pass in silence.

7. Thank contributors specifically, and see guests out properly, in person or on the call.

A Worked Example

Marcus leads a weekly operations meeting that has a reputation for going in circles. The same three problems appear every week, discussed warmly and decided never. He changes one thing: he buys a notebook, and in the last five minutes he reads back what he has written — "Decision: we switch the Tuesday delivery to the morning route. Owner: Fatima, starting next Tuesday. Check: we review the first week's numbers here." Then he sends those lines to the group the same afternoon. In the first week, Fatima corrects one detail he recorded wrong, which proves the value of sending notes fast, while correction is cheap. By the fourth week the circles have stopped, because last week's read-back opens this week's meeting and unfinished actions are visible to everyone. Marcus also models the other half of the lesson: when his own action — a cost estimate — is going to be late, he tells the group on Wednesday instead of letting Friday's meeting discover it, and offers his half-finished figures so Fatima can still plan. The meeting's tone changes completely. Nobody works harder. Everybody's work finally connects.

Common Mistakes

• **Ending with "good discussion" and no decisions.** Warmth without a record evaporates by the next morning.

• **Writing notes days later from memory.** Names, figures, and dates blur fast. Same-day notes are the only reliable kind.

• **Recording guesses as decisions.** If it was not agreed, say it is open. A false record sends people building on sand.

• **Letting a deadline slip in silence.** Early warning preserves trust; silence destroys it and harms other people's plans.

• **Vague thanks or no thanks.** "Thanks everyone" is wallpaper. One specific thank-you tells a person their work was actually seen.

Lesson 4 — Business Meals: Food, Conversation, and the Bill

A business meal is a meeting with food attached, and it frightens people out of proportion to its real difficulty. The secret is that the meal itself is simple, and nearly everything that matters happens in the same skills you have already learned: preparation, listening, and ending well. Whether it is a sandwich with a new colleague, lunch with a client, or a formal dinner, the purpose is the relationship and the conversation. The food is the setting, not the test. People who understand that relax, and relaxed people are good company, which is the entire point.

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Before the meal, the practical checks apply again. Confirm the place, the time, and who is coming. If you chose the venue, choose somewhere reasonably quiet where conversation is possible, with choices for different dietary needs — and if you do not know a guest's needs, asking beforehand is thoughtful, not intrusive: "We are booking lunch — is there anything you cannot eat, or anywhere you would rather avoid?" Arrive early, let the staff know you are expecting guests, and if you are the host, decide the paying question in advance so there is no fumbling at the end. If you are the guest, bring a small amount of readiness instead: know roughly what things cost on the menu so you can order in the middle range without anxiety, and follow your host's lead on how formal the occasion is.

Ordering well is mostly about removing friction. Choose something you can eat neatly while talking — a meal that needs wrestling, drips heavily, or arrives as a construction project steals your attention from your guests. If your host recommends a dish, accepting the recommendation is a small, gracious way of trusting their judgement. Order simply, state any allergies plainly and without apology, and avoid the most expensive item unless your host urges it on you. If alcohol is part of the setting, the etiquette is restraint: it is always acceptable to decline — "Just water for me, thank you" needs no explanation — and if you drink, one drink and a pace slower than the table's is the professional standard. A business meal is the worst possible place to test your capacity, because everything said after the second drink is still remembered by everyone else the next morning.

Conversation at the table follows the meeting rules with softer edges. The host guides the opening — a few minutes of general talk before business is polite at lunch and expected at dinner — but as a guest you can help by bringing two or three easy topics that are not work: travel, the city, a book, the venue itself. Avoid the subjects that reliably sour a table: other people's salaries, office conflicts, health details, and strong political argument with people you barely know. Keep your phone off the table entirely. A phone face down on the table still announces that something else may outrank the people present at any moment. If you are expecting a genuinely urgent call, say so at the start, briefly: "I may need to step out once — a family matter is unfolding today." Said in advance, it is understood. Done silently and repeatedly, it is a snub. When the bill comes, the rule is that whoever issued the invitation expects to pay, and the graceful guest offers once — "Please, let me get this" — accepts the host's refusal without a contest, and thanks them plainly. Wrestling over a bill is not generosity; it is theatre at the host's expense. If you are the host, pay without performance, tip properly where tipping is the custom, and never make the cost visible as a burden. Then, the next day, a short thank-you message completes the meal properly, and Lesson 5's follow-up habits take over.

The Steps

1. Confirm venue, time, and guests in advance. As host, check dietary needs and book somewhere quiet enough for conversation.
2. Arrive early. As host, greet staff, confirm the table, and settle the paying plan before guests arrive.
3. Order food you can eat neatly while talking. Follow your host's lead on formality and price range.

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4. Decline alcohol freely if you wish, with no explanation. If you drink, keep it to one and go slowly.

5. Keep your phone away and off the table. Warn the table in advance only if a truly urgent call is possible.

6. Let the host open general conversation before business. Bring easy, non-work topics of your own.

7. Let the inviter pay. Offer once, accept their answer graciously, and thank them.

8. Send a short thank-you message the next day, mentioning one specific thing you enjoyed or learned.

A Worked Example

Sofia, who runs a small design studio, invites a potential client, Mr. Bennett, to lunch to discuss a rebrand. She books a quiet restaurant she knows, asks his assistant beforehand whether he has any dietary needs, and learns he does not eat shellfish — so she quietly rules out the seafood place she first had in mind and never mentions the adjustment. She arrives ten minutes early and tells the waiter she is hosting and will take the bill. Over lunch she lets general conversation run first — his firm's move to a new office, the neighbourhood — and only raises the rebrand when the main courses arrive, which is when he raises it himself. She orders a simple pasta she can eat while listening, declines wine with a smile and no story, and when he offers to split the bill she accepts his thanks gracefully after one polite offer from him, which she declines as host. The next morning she sends a short message thanking him and mentioning his point about the firm's history, which she had listened to carefully. Two weeks later he signs — and tells her the lunch decided it, because a supplier who runs a lunch that smoothly, he reasoned, will run a project that smoothly. He was right about what the meal measured. It was never the food.

Common Mistakes

- **Choosing a loud or complicated venue.** If guests must shout or wrestle their food, conversation — the purpose of the meal — dies.
- **Ordering the most expensive dish as a guest.** It reads as taking advantage, even when the host can easily afford it.
- **Treating the meal as a break from manners.** Servers, staff, and delays reveal character. Rudeness to staff is noticed by every guest.
- **Drinking at your social pace.** A business meal is work. The standard is restraint, whatever others at the table choose.
- **Phone on the table, "just in case."** In case of what outranking your guests? Put it away. Genuine urgency can be announced in advance.
- **Fighting over the bill.** One gracious offer, then accept the answer. Prolonged contests embarrass everyone.

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Lesson 5 — Networking and Follow-Up: Relationships Without the Performance

Networking has an image problem. Many people picture a crowded room, a stack of business cards, and conversations that feel like sales pitches wearing name badges. Real networking is almost the opposite of that picture. It is the slow building of a web of people who know your work, trust your word, and think of you when a relevant problem appears — and whom you think of, and help, in return. It happens in corridors and community events and online groups as much as at formal events, and its raw materials are the same as everywhere else in this set: preparation, listening, and follow-through. The good news hidden in that is that you do not need a new personality to network well. You need a method.

Start smaller than the room. At any event, set a modest goal: two or three real conversations beat twenty shallow ones. A real conversation means learning what the other person does, what they are working on, and what a good outcome looks like for them — and them learning the same about you. Open with something true and easy: ask what brought them to the event, what they are working on this season, or follow up on a talk you both just heard. Introduce yourself with the name-and-role line from Lesson 2, then ask questions and actually listen to the answers. The person who asks good questions and remembers the answers is remembered as fascinating, which is one of professional life's open secrets. When a conversation has run its natural course, leave it gracefully and completely: "I've really enjoyed this — I want to let you meet others too. May I follow up with you next week about the training question?" A clean ending with a stated next step is worth ten card exchanges with no plan attached.

Follow-up is where networking is won or lost, and it is pure etiquette. Within two working days, send a short message: who you are, where you met, one specific thing from the conversation, and the next step if there is one. "Hello Grace — we met at Thursday's breakfast after the talk on apprenticeships. Your point about buddy systems in week one stayed with me. If it would help, I can send the one-page outline our team uses." That message works because it is specific, brief, and gives something before it asks for anything. Giving first is the engine of the whole practice: an introduction to someone useful, an article that answers their question, a congratulations when their work is recognised. Keep light records of who you met, what you discussed, and what you promised, because memory fades and a promise forgotten is worse than a promise never made. Stay in occasional touch — a few times a year is plenty — with something relevant each time, never a bare "just checking in" repeated monthly, which teaches people to dread your name.

Two cautions complete the lesson. First, networking is not collecting. Do not ask for favours, jobs, or introductions in a first conversation, and do not treat people as doors to other people. Second, online networking follows identical rules at higher speed. Connect with a personal note, not a bare request. Comment with substance or not at all. And never forward, tag, or share someone's details without asking — the trust that makes a network valuable is built from exactly those small respects, kept over years. Played this way, networking stops being a performance and becomes what it should have been all along: the ordinary courtesy of your working life, extended deliberately to people you have just met.

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The Steps

1. Before an event, set a goal of two or three real conversations, and prepare your name-and-role introduction line.
2. Open with an easy, genuine question — what brought them here, or what they are working on now.
3. Ask questions, listen fully, and remember specifics. Note them down right after the conversation ends.
4. End conversations cleanly: thank the person, name one thing you valued, and state any next step plainly.
5. Follow up within two working days with a short, specific message that gives before it asks.
6. Keep simple records of contacts, conversations, and promises — and honour every promise you record.
7. Stay in touch a few times a year with something relevant. Never share someone's details without permission.

A Worked Example

Daniel dreads networking events and usually leaves with a pocket of cards and nothing else. At a regional business breakfast he tries the method instead. He has one real conversation with Helen, who runs a community kitchen project and mentions, almost in passing, that her volunteer rota keeps collapsing. Daniel listens, asks two questions about how the rota works, and recognises the problem: it is the same scheduling problem his own workplace solved last year. He ends the conversation by asking if he may send her the simple template his team uses. The next day he sends it, with a two-line message recalling their talk. Helen replies with thanks, tries the template, and a month later invites Daniel to speak briefly to her volunteers about scheduling. Six months on, when Daniel's employer looks for a community partner for a staff volunteering day, Helen's project is his first call — and she says yes at once, because she already knows his word is good. No pitch was made at any point. One listened-to problem, one kept promise, and one prompt follow-up built the whole connection.

Common Mistakes

- **Working the room instead of meeting people.** Twenty shallow chats produce twenty people who cannot remember you.
- **Pitching in the first conversation.** Asking for favours or business immediately teaches people to avoid you next time.
- **Following up late, vaguely, or never.** "Great meeting you" three weeks later, with no specifics, is worse than silence — it proves you were not listening.
- **Treating contacts as a collection.** People can tell when they are being gathered rather than known. Networks built on use collapse.
- **Sharing details without permission.** Passing on someone's email or story without asking breaks the trust your whole network rests on.

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- **Only contacting people when you need something.** A network watered only by requests dries up. Give first, and give occasionally.

Try It

Choose one real situation from your next two weeks — a meeting, a meal, or an event — and run this full practice on it. First, prepare on paper: write the purpose in one sentence, your role in one sentence, and the result you hope exists at the end. Read any material sent to you, completely, and write down two questions it raises. Second, on the day, arrive or join five minutes early and introduce yourself — or one other person — using the name, role, and connection method from Lesson 2. During the event, keep your phone away, echo one speaker's point back before answering it, and notice, honestly, how often you were tempted to interrupt. Third, close it properly: make sure decisions, owners, and dates are spoken aloud before you leave, write your notes the same day, and send them, or your thank-you and follow-up message, within one working day. If your practice situation includes a promise — a document to send, an introduction to make — record it where you keep tasks, with a date, and keep it.

Afterwards, give yourself a short, honest review in writing. Where did preparation save you? Where did you slip — a name missed, a glance at the phone, a follow-up sent late? Pick the single weakest point and make it your focus for the next real situation. Etiquette is not learned by reading; it is learned by this loop of prepare, practise, review, repeated until the behaviours run on their own. Most people who do this exercise twice report the same discovery: other people start describing them as professional, organised, and easy to work with — and nothing about their actual expertise changed at all. Only the signals did. That is the whole subject in one sentence.

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