



youth service bureau

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## Etiquette Tips for Tweens and Teens

By: Sarah Holmboe, M.A., YSB Parent Education Coordinator

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Your teens aren't kids anymore. They have new responsibilities and will be interacting with adults more and more, and in new ways. You won't always be there to guide them through a conversation or phone call. They might start scheduling their own appointments and may even go to their first (or second, or third...) job interview. They will eventually have their own cell phones (whether you like it or not)!

We all hope our kids are well prepared to face the new challenges of adolescence and young adulthood, but sometimes they need a little extra help perfecting their skills. What can seem like common sense to us parents might not to our kids.

**One of the important skills tweens and teens need to be successful? Etiquette! Here are some basic etiquette tips your teens and tweens need to know:**

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### Phone Etiquette - When Making a Phone Call

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- Always begin with **“Hello, my name is...” and the reason for calling.** (“I’m calling to schedule a doctor’s appointment” or “I’m calling to speak to Mrs. Brown.”)
- Remember that you are speaking to another human being. **Be polite, but don’t worry if you make a mistake or fumble your words.** You can laugh it off and try again – it’s likely the person on the other end has had moments like that too! (“Sorry, let me say that again...”)
- If you don’t understand what the other person said, ask “Can you repeat that?” or “Sorry, what was that again?” **Do NOT ask, “What?” – it’s rude and unclear!**
- **Address people as “Mr. [Last name]” or “Mrs. [Last name]”** unless they have specified that you can call them by their first name.
- **Speak clearly and slowly!** It can be difficult to hear over the phone, especially names and addresses.
- **If the person you are speaking to asks you to spell out a name, address, etc., do so clearly and slowly.** You may also want to clarify letters that sound alike (such as B and D.) For example, you can say “B as in Boy” or “D as in Dog” – this helps the person on the other end know exactly which letter you are saying!
- You may get asked a few questions if you are scheduling an appointment or something similar. **If you aren’t sure of the answer and need to call the person back, let them know!** It’s better to call back with the right answer than to make something up or be unsure.

- End the conversation with a **“Thank you!”**

**Bonus tip for parents:**

Model appropriate phone calls for your children. Next time you call someone, put him or her on speakerphone and have your children listen in. How do you handle the conversation? After the call, ask your children if they have any questions.

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### Phone Etiquette - When Leaving a Message

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- Always begin with **“Hello, my name is...” and the reason for calling.** (“I’m calling to schedule a doctor’s appointment” or “I’m calling to speak to Mrs. Brown.”)
- **Leave enough detail for the other person, but don’t ramble on and on.** (“I have a question for Mrs. Brown about my upcoming interview.”)
- **Leave your name (again!) with a phone number they can reach you at.** (“Again, this is John Doe, and you can reach me at 123-456-7890.”)
- End with a **“Thank you!”**
- **Address people as “Mr. [Last name]” or “Mrs. [Last name]”** unless they have specified that you can call them by their first name.
- **Speak clearly and slowly!** It can be difficult to hear over the phone, especially names and addresses.

**Bonus tip for parents:**

Model appropriate phone calls for your children. Next time you leave a message for someone, put it on speakerphone and have your children listen in. How do you handle the conversation? After the call, ask your children if they have any questions.

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### Phone Etiquette - General Use

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- **Follow The Golden Rule** – do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Be polite, whether you are calling or texting. Remember that there is always someone on the receiving end of your words.
- **Do not talk on the phone, text, or use apps while driving. Period.** This is super distracting and unsafe. Nothing is so important that it can’t wait. If you absolutely need to call, text, look up directions, or anything else, either hand it to a passenger OR pull off the road (or pull into a parking lot).
- **Turn off your ringer/alerts when in public places.** Nothing is more annoying than hearing someone’s phone ring or beep every time they get a call or text.

- If you need to take a phone call while in a public place (or on public transportation), **keep the call quick and be as quiet as you can**. Let the other person know (“I’m on the bus so I can’t talk for very long”) and then wrap up your conversation. The rest of the world doesn’t need to hear your business – and they probably don’t want to either!
- **Don’t use the phone or text when spending time with someone**. It’s rude and makes the other person feel unimportant. If you are expecting a text or call that you need to respond to, simply let the other person know. When you respond, be quick and polite. Otherwise, let the call go to voicemail or ignore the text – you can get back to them later.
- **Do not use the phone while waiting in line at a store, bank, etc. and especially once you are being served at these establishments**. Nothing is more annoying or rude to an employee than a customer who is on their phone during check-out.
- **Do not take a picture of someone else without his or her permission, and do not share that picture with anyone else** (in person, via text, OR on the Internet/social media). This can lead to conflict and even more trouble (especially if the picture is inappropriate.)
- **Don’t call or text when angry or if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol**. You might regret it later, and once you send something there’s no going back.

**Bonus tip for parents:**

Ask your children what they would do in a “what-if” scenario, and talk through the best solution. For example, “What would you do if you were out with a friend and you received a text message from a parent that said ‘*EMERGENCY – please call?*’”

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### Text Message Etiquette

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- **Follow The Golden Rule** – do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Be polite. Remember that there is always someone on the receiving end of your words. **Once you hit send, you can’t take it back and it’s out of your control. Be smart about what you send and who you send it to.**
- Think of texting as an alternative to calling someone on the phone – **when you wouldn’t call, don’t text**. For example, you wouldn’t call someone in a movie theater, so don’t text during the movie either. You wouldn’t call someone during class, so don’t text either.
- **Do not text while driving. Period.** This is super distracting and unsafe. Nothing is so important that it can’t wait. If you absolutely need to text, either hand it to a passenger OR pull off the road (or pull into a parking lot).
- **Double check who you are texting!!** Once you hit send you can’t take it back.
- **Don’t text anything confidential or private.** You may trust who you are texting but you never know who could be on the other end (or you might text the wrong person)! This information can also be forwarded to others. Once you hit send, it’s out of your control.

- **If you text someone who doesn't have your phone number, be sure to let them, know who you are.** ("Hi Tiffany, it's Kate from geography class. The assignment is on page 202. See you tomorrow in class!")
- **Don't use the phone or text when spending time with someone.** It's rude and makes the other person feel unimportant. If you are expecting a text or call that you need to respond to, simply let the other person know. When you respond, be quick and polite. Otherwise, let the call go to voicemail or ignore the text – you can get back to them later.
- **Don't call or text when angry or if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.** You might regret it later, and once you send something there's no going back.
- If you receive a text message by mistake, **let the person know they have the wrong number.** ("You have the wrong number – this isn't George.") You do NOT have to respond to anything else in the message. (If the person won't stop texting you or if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, block their number.)
- Just because you have your phone with you doesn't mean the person you are texting does. **If you don't get a response to a text right away, it's okay! Check back in later.** If it's an emergency, try calling instead of texting.

**Bonus tip for parents:**

Be a model for your children and show them what appropriate texting looks like. Do not text and drive – EVER. If you don't text, tell your children what you expect of them when it comes to texting and let them know you have the right to look through their messages if they should ever suspect any inappropriate activity.

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### Interview Etiquette

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- **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONE.** At any time. Period. No texting, no calling, no checking the time. Leave your phone in the car, and if you must take it in with you, turn the phone OFF and do not touch it until after the interview.
- **Arrive early** – not only does this make you look professional, but it gives you time to calm down and compose yourself before the interview. Rushing in late will make you feel nervous and unprepared.
- **Dress appropriately.** No matter what job you are interviewing for, always "dress for success." No dirty or ripped clothing, and do not wear anything too revealing (no low cut or cropped tops, no short skirts or shorts). A good go-to interview outfit might be dark pants (NOT jeans), a nice dress shirt/blouse/sweater, and closed-toe shoes.
- **Begin and end the interview with a firm handshake.**

- **Address the interviewer as “Mr. [Last name]” or “Mrs. [Last name]”** unless they have specified that you can call them by their first name.
- **Speak clearly and slowly!** And, make sure to use **eye contact**.
- If you don’t understand a question, ask **“Can you repeat that?”** or “Can you explain what you mean by that?”
- If you are thrown off by a question and need a second to compose yourself, **sometimes it is helpful to repeat the question out loud and say “Let me think about that for a moment.”**
- After the interview, **thank the interviewer for the opportunity (and make sure to shake their hand again!).**
- **Send a written thank-you** note after the interview as well – this helps you stand apart from other interviewees!
- Above all else, **BE PREPARED**. Read through potential interview questions ahead of time and work on your answers. Practice eye contact and speaking slowly and clearly. Practice your handshake too!

**Bonus tip for parents:**

Help your children prepare for an interview by asking them some interview questions and brainstorming responses. You can find a variety of questions online!

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## Resources

The Emily Post Institute - [www.EmilyPost.com](http://www.EmilyPost.com) / <http://emilypost.com/advice-type/teens/>

Psychology Today - [www.PsychologyToday.com](http://www.PsychologyToday.com)

Parents Magazine - [www.Parents.com](http://www.Parents.com)