Professionalism Guidelines

**Pro-fes-sion-al-ism:**
- The conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person.
- The skill, good judgment, and polite behavior that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.
- Professionalism is a characteristic highly valued by employers and teammates alike.
- Professionalism varies depending on the work environment and culture. What is deemed “professional” can vary. Look at the behavior and expectations of supervisors and other successful colleagues. Consider that professionalism will differ for an Occupational Therapist in a hospital vs. a school or even in a corporate healthcare setting.

**Elements of Professionalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong work ethic</th>
<th>Respectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attentive</td>
<td>Focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>Polished image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team oriented</td>
<td>Courteous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>Problem solver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Always be at least 5-10 minutes early (meetings, assignments) “If you’re early, you’re on time and if you’re on time, you’re late!”
2. Listen first. Being a good listener demonstrates respect to those speaking to you, a crucial skill as you move forward in your career. Listen to understand and not to respond right away.
3. Incorporate feedback into your work. It is essential that you accept criticism and use it positively to create a changed work product or behavioral style. Doing so shows maturity, growth and respect.
4. Project confidence, not arrogance. Companies want to hire people who can offer their own opinions, who demonstrate enthusiasm, and who take pride and ownership in their work. That said, there is a fine line between a confident new employee and an arrogant one. Promote a strong confident presence but be open to collaboration and feedback from others. Create an effective calendar system that will help you be productive and efficient at work. Take the time to learn all of the features available to you for whatever operating system your organization has
5. Triple spell and grammar check everything. There is no excuse for poor spelling and grammar. Print out and proofread your work before submitting it. Mistakes may lead people to believe you are not detail oriented or focusing on your work.
6. Be aware of your professional attire. Err on the side of conservatism when it comes to your professional dress, especially in your early days at the job. Learn the expectations of your role, department, and organization. As the saying goes, “Don’t dress for the job you have; dress for the job you want.”
7. Limit your personal screen time. Do not spend your time on personal blogs, social media accounts, shopping websites, etc. Remember, your company is well within its rights to track any personal use you make of company-provided devices. Frequently, as a part of new hire paperwork, employees are required to agree to a company’s technology policy that allows them to monitor all activity on company property.

8. Pay attention to cell phone usage. Watch other employees and supervisors and limit yourself to less screen time than they do, if at all.

9. Keep a positive attitude. Leave your bad mood at the door when you come to work. We all have days when we aren't feeling our best. Remember not to take it out on your boss, your coworkers and especially your customers. Smiling and having a positive attitude is contagious and can spread throughout your work environment. If your role is the source of dissatisfaction, it may be time to think about finding a new position. If that isn't a good option for you, make the best of the situation until it is.

10. Know your audience. This applies to both office etiquette and work product. A senior partner often wants important highlights quickly, while a more junior associate might want more details in your report. Always understand the needs of the person to whom you are reporting, and anticipate any future needs down the road. If unsure, it is acceptable to ask for their expectations for your work.

11. Offer to help your colleagues. A true professional is willing to help his or her coworkers when they are overburdened and also helps coworkers regardless of personal feelings or disagreements. He or she isn't afraid to share knowledge, opinions or simply an extra pair of hands. One person's success reflects well on everyone in his or her workplace.

12. Don’t hide from your mistakes. As hard as it may be to do, take ownership of your mistakes and do your best to correct them. Make sure you don't make the same mistake twice. Never blame others, but set an example so that those who share responsibility for the mistake can step forward and admit it. Preferably, come to your boss with solutions to the problem.

13. Respond to communications promptly, respectfully and in the same medium you received them. In other words, do not email in response to a voicemail, and unless text messaging is specifically initiated by your partner or client, do not use text messages as your communication medium.

14. Learn to navigate the organization’s culture. Every office and company has an organizational culture. You will benefit greatly from spending your first months listening, observing and learning those cultural norms so you can modulate your behavior accordingly.

15. Only say "thank you" once or twice during a conversation. If you over use the term, you’ll dilute its impact and make yourself seem needy or helpless. Listen to your filler words. Be conscious of saying ‘um,’ “like,” and other colloquial or unnecessary words in conversations. This can result in others not seeing you as confident or professional as you truly are.

16. Send separate thank-you notes to everyone involved in any type of event or program where others have helped you. It is important to show gratitude and it is a positive reflection of you. When interviewing, it's customary to send an email or handwritten thank-you note to all of the people you met with.

17. Leave your phone in your pocket, desk drawer, office, etc. Don’t take it out during meetings. If you have an work related important phone call or email you are waiting for, share it with your supervisor and meeting attendees before the meeting. Make sure you are paying attention and able to contribute to the meeting content and your phone is supplementing your work and not detracting from it.
18. Use professional headshots. For your business profile on LinkedIn or other websites, don’t post a photo of yourself at the beach. You won’t be taken seriously.

19. If you forget someone’s name, admit it. It’s no big deal! Just say, “I’m so sorry, but I’ve forgotten your name. Can you remind me what it is?” At the conclusion of the conversation, use their name so they know you paid attention and will remember in the future.

20. Greet people at work. Say hello to the people you know as well as the people you don’t know.

21. Never pull out someone’s chair for them. In a business setting, you should leave behind social gender rules. It’s okay to hold open the door for a guest, but a man does not have to pull out a woman’s chair.

22. Create to-do lists to maximize efficiency. You will have multiple demands on your limited time. To-do lists will allow you to schedule responsibilities and handle various commitments effectively.

23. Make sure you manage expectations. Do not over-commit yourself. You will end up producing sub-standard work product for those who expect a superior work product. Better to under-promise and over-deliver than do the opposite.

24. Stand up when you’re being introduced to someone. This helps establish your presence. Always say your full name when introducing yourself and shake hands if possible. When leaving, also stand and shake hands goodbye.

25. If you don’t know, ask. While asking too many questions is one of the major criticisms of the millennial generation, it is also essential that you understand the scope of your assignment before tackling it. Get as much information as you can at the very beginning of an assignment and check-in with the project supervisor when necessary. There may be situations where the best person to ask is a colleague vs. a supervisor.

26. Treat all staff with respect and courtesy. Everyone in your office deserves the same respect and courtesy you would like them to show to you.

27. Always follow the ethical path. There are many ethical rules that apply to employment settings, some of which are common sense, others of which are not. Learn and apply these ethical rules to your daily practice.

28. Keep track of your accomplishments. You are your single best advocate. Throughout your career, keep track of memoranda, projects, reviews, recommendations, and anything that demonstrates how you have positively developed as a professional and could be useful for promotions.

29. Challenge yourself. Do not be content with doing a passable job. Be creative and innovative. Learn about your company and always be willing to offer new ideas and tackle new projects.

30. Find a mentor, someone who can offer you career advice, sponsor your success and stay a friend and guide throughout your career. It will take some time to find your match, but the pay-off is worth it.
Emotional Intelligence: What is it?

The moral principles that govern your behavior and recognizing the existence of different perspectives.

Why is it important?
- Builds trust
- Enhances mental health
- Builds stronger, healthier relationships
- Better performance at work

Four Attributes:
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Management

Sense of Self:
- Understand one’s personal identity, values, and ethics, and how they impact the way you interact with others
- Use reflection in order to maintain an awareness of self
- Behave in a respectful and professional manner

Self-Awareness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When You Demonstrate</th>
<th>People Who Struggle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own feelings</td>
<td>Easily irritated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of why feelings occur</td>
<td>Doesn’t see the impact of emotions or actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand implications</td>
<td>Not sensitive to others feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to feedback</td>
<td>Rarely seek or accept feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-Management:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When You Demonstrate</th>
<th>People Who Struggle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible and can work with changing situations and different people</td>
<td>Reacts impulsively to stressful situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep impulsive feelings and emotions under control</td>
<td>Are likely to become angry, depressed or agitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement orientated</td>
<td>May regret behavior afterwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Awareness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When You Demonstrate</th>
<th>People Who Struggle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to read other’s emotions</td>
<td>Believe everyone thinks like they do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand other’s reasons for actions</td>
<td>Spends time planning their responses rather than listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the importance of values and culture of group or organization</td>
<td>Are frequently surprised by what someone has said or done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand political forces at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Showing Empathy**
- Listen with your: ears, eyes, and heart
- Don’t interrupt or dismiss concerns offhand
- Tune into non-verbal communication
- Use people’s names
- Be fully present when you are with people
- Encourage others to speak up
- Give genuine recognition and praise

**Conflict:**
- A serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one.
- Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict.
- The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in organizational setting

**Helpful Phrases for Difficult Conversations:** 4-Part Assertion Statement
- When you...(description of other’s behavior)
- I feel...(disclosure of your feelings about other’s behavior)
- Because...(description of the effect of other’s behavior on you).
- What I need from you is...(description of negotiated need)
Voicemail Best Practices

1. Have your voicemail inbox set with a professional greeting and cleared so it is not full. You will miss important messages without doing so also look unprofessional or unprepared. Check your voicemail frequently and return messages promptly.

   Example 1: Hi. This is NAME. I am currently unable to take your call. Please leave your name, phone number, and a brief message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you.

   Example 2: Hi, you’ve reached NAME. Sorry, I’m unable to take your call right now. Please leave your name and number and I’ll be in touch as soon as possible.

2. When leaving voicemails, be sure to be concise, clear with your message, and professional.

   Think First
   Before you pick up the phone pause for a second and summarize, in your mind, the purpose of the call in one or two sentences. Remember, between 50% to 67% of all calls end up going to voicemail. Now you will be prepared to leave a concise voicemail message without rambling on until the phone system cuts you off.

   Introduce Yourself
   Begin every voicemail message by introducing yourself, so the recipient knows who calling right away. It should include your full name, title, and company name.

   Speak Slowly
   Speak slowly enough so the person receiving the message can hear every word. It is very frustrating when to retrieve messages only to find that the other person is speaking so quickly that you must listen more than once to understand them or to jot a short note about the call.

   Speak Clearly
   Speak directly into the mouthpiece of your telephone in a clear and adequately modulated tone of voice. Don’t hold the phone between your cheek and shoulder so that the mouthpiece is positioned by your neck.

   Keep It Short
   You don’t have to leave every detail on your voicemail message. Most business phone systems have a one to a two-minute time limit for messages. It is acceptable to leave a short summary of the reason for your call and end it by saying, "Please return my call and I will go over the issue with you in more detail."

   End It Professionally
   Just like a professional business letter, end by giving your contact information. If you the person is unfamiliar with you or might have trouble placing you, repeat your name and company along with the best way to reach you and your contact information. If you already have a strong working relationship, you may be able to skip repeating your name, but still be sure to give them the best number to reach you.
Dropped Call?
If you believe your voicemail message was dropped by the voicemail system before you were
finished, try the call again and lead off by telling the person that you believe your previous
message may have been dropped.

Example: "Hello. This is _______; I think my previous message may have been cut-off. So here
it is again..."

Practice and Test Yourself
If you are unsure, you are speaking too fast, or not clearly enough, ask a friend or business
associate to help you. Call and leave a fabricated voicemail message on their phone. Ask them to
listen to it and evaluate it based on the tips listed above. Listen to it yourself and see if you
sound professional.

Email Best Practices
1. As with voicemails, check your email inbox frequently. Response time for email can vary but the
average is about 24-48 hours at least. You can respond that you have received an email but
share you have to do some more work/digging to get the answer/work to at least give courtesy
to the sender that they know it was received.
2. Double-check that you have selected the correct email recipient.
3. Watch attachments – make sure the file is actually attached with an appropriate, relevant name.
4. Personalize your emails. This builds rapport and a connection.
5. Be mindful of email length. Keep it short and concise but not too casual.
6. Thank people for their time.
7. Watch the recipient list, especially order. If you are emailing your boss, her colleagues, and their
assistants, start with your boss’s name and then list the recipients in order of
importance/seniority.
8. Review your carbon copies (CC’s). Make sure that the people who are supposed to be copied on
the e-mail, are on the email. Sometimes, it can help to address the multiple people in an email
why they are included in the email to ensure everyone is on the same page.
9. Watch out for forward and reply all. This button can get you in A LOT of trouble. Don’t
accidentally send a message to someone you didn’t mean to send it to you. Double check!
10. Double check the sender! You’d be surprised how many people have similar names.
11. Beware of the paper trail. Don’t write anything you wouldn’t want someone else to see.
12. Check the blind carbon copy (BCC). If someone BCCs you on an email, it typically means the
point of the email is to make you aware of the information and keep you in the loop, but it
doesn’t mean that you should directly respond. In fact, usually if you are BCC’d it means the
person sending the e-mail doesn’t want you to respond. Usually, they don’t even want the
person the e-mail was sent to realizing that you were on the email. If you aren’t sure if the e-
mail requires a response, ask your supervisor.
13. Out of office away messages – look at others emails and see other best practices to incorporate
into their practices --- wording, signing, etc.
14. Close the email appropriately. Sign with “Best” or “Regards.” Your email signature should be set up within your organization – but if not, it should include the following information:

- First and Last Name
- Position/Title
- Company Name
- Company Website
- Phone Number

**Networking Follow-Up Emails**
The examples below are templates. Use them as a framework if necessary, but personalize them more to the specific encounter you had with the individual.

Hi Name,

It was great meeting you at the healthcare conference over the weekend! I really enjoyed chatting with you and learning more about your organization. I wanted to send over my contact information so that we can connect in the future.

Best,
Name

Hi Name,

Great meeting you at the consulting conference over the weekend. We have so much in common! It was great hearing about your similar experiences with clients and events. I’d love to talk more and ask you some questions about an upcoming project I am working on. Do you have some time in the coming weeks?

Regards,
Name

Adapted from:
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20-professionalism-tips-millennials-michelle-silverthorn

Professionalism in the Workplace; How to Conduct Yourself on the Job
https://www.thebalance.com/professionalism-526248

21 Professional Etiquette Rules You Need to Know by Katie Sweeney (2015)
http://www.mydomaine.com/professional-etiquette-rules

Welcome to the Real World by Lauren Berger (2014)