

# What is Cell Phone Etiquette?

Cell phone etiquette involves following some simple guidelines of common courtesy when using a cell phone in public, designed to make public places more enjoyable for all.

Chances are, you've been annoyed at one point or another by someone not practicing proper cell phone etiquette. The man or woman talking loudly into a mobile phone offends those forced to listen to business that's none of their own. Private conversations, arguments, details about how a meeting went, or intimate knowledge of what's in a stranger's refrigerator at home are all things unwilling eavesdroppers can do without.

Aside from overbearing conversations, obnoxious ringtones provide regular disruptions. The ambiance of restaurants and cafes must now compete with ringing phones and one-sided conversations. Distraction is another problem. Drivers talking on phones make last minute decisions or miss what's going on entirely, causing unnecessary delays for the motorists stuck behind them, or worse, traffic accidents. (In 2001 such accidents caused New York to be the first state to ban cell phone use while driving.) Some people have gotten so fed up with rude mobile phone users they have turned to illegal cell phone jammers. These devices knock cell phone users off their lines and prevent a reconnection with the cell tower until the user wanders out of range. The rate at which jammers are selling speaks to the lack of manners among yappers.

At least one report indicates that while most people are annoyed by cell phone rudeness, most admit to engaging in it themselves. If you're wondering what you can do to contribute to a more polite society, cell phone etiquette can be boiled down to 8 simple rules:

**1. When a Private Conversation Isn't Possible.** Intimate public settings such as restaurants, public restrooms, waiting rooms, hallways, buses, subways or anywhere a private conversation is not possible is a bad place for a cell phone conversation. To practice good cell phone etiquette, put the ringer on vibrate or silent mode and let the call roll over to voice mail. If it's an important call, step outside or to a secluded area to return the call. If that's not possible and you must take the call, keep your voice low and the conversation brief. Let the caller know you'll get back to them when you're able.

**2. Lights Out, Phone Off.** Phones should be turned off in movie theaters, playhouses, observatories or any other public place that creates an

atmosphere to transport the imagination of the audience. People pay good money to be entertained and a ringer breaks the illusion.

**3. Modulate Your Voice.** Cell phones have sensitive microphones that can pick up a very soft voice while blocking out ambient noise. Yelling into a cell phone is not necessary. When people are nearby, be considerate and keep your voice low, your tone unemotional and even, and your conversation private. Arguing or airing dirty laundry in public is very poor cell phone etiquette.

**4. Observe the 10-foot Proximity Rule.** Maintain a distance of at least 10-feet (3 meters) from the nearest person when talking on a cell phone. No matter how quietly you speak, if standing too close to others they are forced to overhear your personal business.

**5. Keep It Short.** Keep public conversations brief and get back to the caller when you're not in a public place.

**6. Love the One You're With.** It's rude to take a cell phone call on a date or during a social engagement with others. It's also inconsiderate to take a call in the middle of a conversation. If the caller were present he or she would likely wait to politely interrupt at a more appropriate time. Let the call roll to voice mail and return it later.

**7. Drive Now, Talk Later.** Multitasking isn't always a good thing. Some evidence shows that accidents are on the rise due to cell phone use. Most calls can wait until you've reached your destination, and if a call is upsetting or distracting pull over to have the conversation.

**8. Use Common Sense.** Turn off your phone before a job interview, presentation, or boardroom meeting. Leave it off at funerals, weddings, or anyplace a quiet atmosphere is mandated, such as a courthouse, library, museum, or place of worship.

Cell phone etiquette is just a matter of being considerate of others, which pays off for everyone.