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» MONEY

MONEY MANNERS



Mobile phones are the source of a slew of 21st century faux pas.

BY SUSANNAH SNIDER

THE TEMPTATION TO CHECK YOUR mobile phone is powerful, but overdoing it can jeopardize friendships and business relationships and wreak havoc at home. "When you constantly check your phone, whether it's at dinner, at a meeting or with friends, it tells the people you're with that they're not important," says etiquette expert Elaine Swann. Here's how to mind your mobile manners:

At family gatherings. Taking work calls at home can lead your colleagues to think that no hour is off-limits. And it sends the wrong signal to family members. Sit down with your brood and come up with cell-phone guidelines. Mobiles should be banned at the dinner table and on other agreed-upon occasions, such as family game night. And the rules should apply equally to hyper-connected adults and sulky teens alike.

The same idea applies in the bedroom. Couples should agree to limit bedtime cell-phone usage, lest too much texting and tweeting turn your nighttime safe haven into a satellite office. "Texting, e-mailing, or Face-

booking is like bringing others into the bedroom instead of making it a calm retreat," says Anna Post, of the Emily Post Institute.

At social events. Snapping a pic of your beverage isn't necessarily a faux pas (unless you're at a business dinner or a really swanky spot). But it's ill-mannered when you unceasingly check social media for "likes" or comments. "Make it quick and unobtrusive," says Post. And there's a safety bonus in delaying your post: You won't let the world know that you're away from home.

To discourage interruptions, make a game of it: Have everyone place their phones in the middle of the table and agree that the first person to reach for his has to pay for the meal.

At the office. Your cell phone should remain out of sight at meetings. Leave your phone at your desk. If the meeting is across town or you're on the road, keep the phone on "silent" and in a pocket or purse. Expecting an important call? Warn the meeting leader before the session starts, says Swann. Then keep the phone hidden. When it lights up or buzzes with an incoming call, you can grab it, excuse yourself and take the call out of the room.

What about texting the boss or a client? Some business contacts like to get quick messages and updates. But ask first about how they prefer to be contacted—or follow their lead. Letting your boss know your train is delayed? That's fine. Requesting a raise? Not so much. And, as with phone calls, limit business texts to office hours. ■

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