

Welcome to the new world of tablets and smartphones

(You might be reading this on one right now!)

Here are some big picture things to keep in mind as you and those around you sort out the new etiquette of these brand new technologies:



As we all get connected faster and faster over greater and greater distances, it's good idea step back once in a while and ask how the technology we are using affects the quality of the very important human interactions that are happening face-to-face all around us. The answer to these questions will vary from person to person and place to place, but the very act of considering them brings awareness and reduces the risk of unintentional bad behavior.

1. **Is this the right place to use my device?** Are you in a restaurant, theater, or other public place where atmosphere and environment matter to those around you? Is a personal environment the right place for a work related connect? Is a work space appropriate for taking care of personal business? Sometimes the location matters as much as the company you are keeping when deciding how to use your smartphone or tablet.

2. **How is the person I am connected to perceiving this interaction?** Are they likely to be distracted by the buzz of your companion's chatter, the roar of the crowd, or the flushing of a toilet? On a video chat, what will the viewer see? Does the location make sense for the purpose of your call? If you are texting, maybe the person on the other end can't hear the sarcasm in your voice. If you are e-mailing, consider if you will be available to answer the reply when it comes. Take a second to play out the anticipated response chain before you initiate communication to avoid confusion and upsetting your interlocutors.

3. **How are my actions affecting others and how am I perceived?** Both are important aspects of good etiquette. If you are perceived as being disrespectful it can be as damaging to a relationship as actually disrespecting someone. Be clear with the people around you about how you are using your new device so they don't assume the worst. For example, if you are using your tablet to take notes at a meeting, it might be a good idea to let your boss know what you are doing. If you are leaving your phone on during a date because you can get fired for missing an important e-mail it might be a good idea to explain this at the beginning of the evening or even ask if it is still a good idea to go out at all. An ounce of prevention...

4. **Am I in control of my device?** Any behavior can become habitual and start to escape

notice. It's up to you to actively manage your device. Keep your wits about you and your etiquette radar fine tuned. Have fun and take good advantage of all that these new technologies can do.