If your cell phone rings and you're…

…In a restaurant

Excuse yourself from the table and take the call in another room, such as an anteroom, restroom or lobby. Never disturb your own table and other diners by making or taking a call while sitting at the table. (Some 'cell-phone free' restaurants now actually require diners to check their phones at the door.)

…On the street

Be careful not to talk too loudly. And since talking on a phone has been shown to distract people from their immediate surroundings, for safety's sake, pay extra attention to where you're walking.

…At the movies

If there's an all-important call that you absolutely have to take, set your ringer ahead of time to "vibrate," and try to sit in an aisle seat if possible. When your phone rings, quickly excuse yourself to the lobby to answer the call.

…In a car or on a train or bus

Since the people traveling with you in a car or on a bus or train are a captive audience, you should restrict yourself to only the most essential calls—let your rehashing of last night's party wait until the trip's over—and keep all phone conversations as short as possible. On a train, consider stepping into the vestibule area between train cars to make any lengthy calls. If you're riding in a "quiet car" on a train, keep your phone on "vibrate" and move immediately to the vestibule or another car if you need to answer a call. Finally be aware that speaking on a handheld phone while driving is now against the law in many places; so if you need to make or answer a call while you're at the wheel, either pull over or get a headset that will let you talk

while leaving your hands free.

News Flash: You Don't Always Have to Answer it

Before cell phones and caller ID, we invited friends over, and they spent hours without answering their phones. Those landline phones stayed at home. Today, people don't go to the bathroom without taking a cell phone. If your cell phone ring constantly, keep in mind that you're putting the people you're hanging out with "on hold" every time you take a call. When you're with friends, use your judgement before reaching for that ringing phone; in fact, think twice about even leaving it on. After all, your caller can always leave a message.

When you decide to break away to take a call, excuse yourself and step away. If the call involves anything other than a very brief conversation, let the caller know that it's not a good time to talk and you'll call him or her back at another time.

Remember: You are in control of your cell phone.

Taking a call signals that the person you are with is less important than the person calling. If that's not the impression you want to make, don't take the time to call- the caller can always leave a message.