

# HANDSHAKE AND A SMILE 101

A handshake is more than just a greeting. It is also a message about your personality and confidence level. In business, a handshake is an important tool in making the right first impression. While the art of handshaking does vary within cultures, in the United States the "rules" are pretty universal.

## **1. Begin With an Oral Introduction of Yourself**

Before extending your hand, introduce yourself. Extending your hand should be part of an introduction, not a replacement for using your voice. Extending your hand without a voice greeting may make you appear nervous or overly aggressive.

## **2. Pump Your Hand Only 2-3 Times**

A business handshake should be brief and to the point. Consider a handshake a short "sound bite" greeting, not a lengthy engagement. Holding on for more than three or four seconds can make other people feel uncomfortable.

## **3. Shake From Your Elbow**

If you shake from the shoulder, using your upper arm instead of just your forearm, you risk jolting your handshake partner. The idea is to connect, not be overbearing.

## **4. Do Not Use a Forceful Grip**

A handshake should be a friendly or respectful gesture, not a show of physical strength. An uncomfortable handshake is never a pleasant experience for anyone. Imagine you are opening a door handle and use about the same level of grip in your handshake.

## **5. Avoid Offering a "Fish Hand"**

A limp hand is never a good idea when it comes to a business handshake. Do return the grip, but do not get into a power struggle, even if the other person squeezes too hard.

## **6. Forget "Lady Fingers"**

This is not a Southern Cotillion, this is business. Offering only your fingers to shake may be appropriate in some social settings, but in business settings you are an equal, not a "lady." Extend your entire hand, and be sure to grasp using your entire hand as well.

## **7. One Hand is Better than Two**

Avoid the urge to handshake with two hands. It is always better in business introductions to use only one hand – your right hand – for the shake. The use of two hands with strangers is seen as intrusive, and too personal. In fact, a two-handed shake is called the "politician's shake," because it appears artificially friendly when used on people you barely know.

## **8. Shaking a Sweaty Hand**

If you shake hands with someone who has sweaty palms, do not immediately wipe your hands on your clothing, handkerchief, or tissue. This will further embarrass the other person, who is probably already aware they have sweaty hands. You can discretely wipe them on something after you are out of site, and wash them later.

## **9. Ending a Handshake**

End the handshake after 3-4 seconds, or 2-3 pumps. In order to avoid creating an awkward moment, your shake should end before the oral introduction exchange does. Without conversation taking place during the entire handshake, it becomes too intimate, and can feel more like hand holding.

## **10. Covering Your Mistakes**

Even if you make a mistake, do not panic. There are many ways to save the moment. If you are worried that your handshake did not convey the right message about yourself, simply change the focus of the moment by offering a quick compliment or asking the other person a question.

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