

# CUBICLE ETIQUETTE

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Is your current workspace a cubicle? Is a move into a cubicle in your near future? Life in a cube presents certain challenges. And if you're being moved out of an office into a cube farm, the change can be emotional, as well. Working in a cubicle does have some upsides, such as developing an open and connected staff and creating a feeling of camaraderie. However, studies show that most workers are not thrilled with the idea of working in a cube because of the lack of privacy and the increased noise. Here, then, is a set of ground rules that will help cube dwellers remain both productive and neighborly.

## PRIVACY

- Never enter someone's cubicle without permission. Behave as though cubicles have doors. Do not enter before you have eye contact "permission" from the occupant.
- Try not to sneak up behind someone in a cube. Announce yourself at their doorway or lightly knock on the wall.
- Post a sign or flag at your cube entrance to signal when you can be interrupted. Avoid making eye contact with people if you don't want to be interrupted.
- Don't "prairie-dog" over the tops of cubes or peek in as you walk past each one.
- Don't loiter outside someone's cube while you wait for him or her to finish a phone call. Come back at another time.
- Never read someone's computer screen or comment on conversations you've overheard. Resist answering a question you overheard asked in the cube next to you!
- Keep your hands off a cube dweller's desk. Just because there's no door doesn't mean you can help yourself to their paper clips.

## PHONES

- Try to pick up your phone after one or two rings. Set the ringer volume at a low level.
- Limit the use of speakerphones. If you must use one, keep the volume as low as possible. Use a meeting room for conference calls.
- Watch your volume when talking on the phone. A headset can help keep your voice low.
- When you leave your cubicle, turn your phone ringer off and let it go to voicemail or forward your phone number to your new location.
- Never leave your cell phone behind in your cube without first turning it off or to vibrate.
- With personal or sensitive calls, be aware that your neighbors can hear your end of the conversation.

## TALKING

- Use your "library voice".
- Don't talk through cube walls or congregate outside someone's cube. For impromptu meetings, go to a conference room or break room.
- Don't bring clients to your cube to meet with them. Go to an office or conference room.
- Don't yell across the "cube farm". Get up and move to the other person's location.

## GENERAL NOISE

- Use email or instant messaging to communicate silently with your coworkers.
- Play radios at low volumes or use a headset.
- Set your PC volume to a low level and turn off screensaver sound effects.
- Set pagers to vibrate.
- Work out an arrangement with your neighbors to take lunch breaks at different times. This will give each of you some quiet time in your cube.
- Eat quietly. Avoid gum-popping, humming, slurping and pen tapping.

## SMELLS

- A good rule of thumb is to never eat hot food at your desk. Food odors can bother your hungry or nauseous neighbors.
- Perfume and cologne should be avoided in a cubicle arrangement. Your neighbors may have allergies.
- Keep an air freshener handy.
- Keep your shoes on!