

7 Handshake Rules You Shouldn't Break

To avoid appearing rude, wimpy, aggressive, or just plain gross, here are some tips for creating a positive and assertive first impression.

1. Know when to shake hands

At minimum, you should shake hands when:- Someone introduces him or herself to you- Someone introduces a third party to you- You introduce yourself to someone new- Ending a conversation or saying goodbye

2. Shake for no more than three “pumps”

A business handshake shouldn't last more than two to three pumps or approximately three seconds. If you hold on too long, or pump too many times as if you're trying to bring up water from a well, you can make people uncomfortable or appear anxious and unsure of yourself.

3. Shake from your elbow, not your shoulder

A handshake should be assertive, but not jarring to the other person. If you shake from your shoulder, using your entire arm, you can knock people off balance (or dislocate their arm). Shake from your elbow in a smooth, up and down motion.

4. Don't use a “dead fish” or “wet fish” handshake

A handshake that is limp or too soft can convey weakness to the other party and puts you in a “one down” position. Additionally, if your hands tend to sweat, or you've just come from the gym, discreetly pat your hands on your slacks before extending your hand. Or if you can, go wash and dry your hands before approaching people.

5. Don't use a “bone crusher” handshake

I shouldn't walk away from your handshake unable to feel my fingers. A handshake isn't the time to show someone else how strong you are. The bone crusher handshake, even if offered in return to a bone crusher handshake, is never appropriate and only serves to make you appear aggressive and unprofessional.

Spend a lot of time at the gym and don't know your own strength? A good test of grip is to only use the force required to grab and turn an UNLOCKED door handle.

6. Don't use the “little lady” handshake EVEN IF you're a man shaking hands with a woman

The “little lady” handshake is that soft, fingertips-only handshake that can be offered by men or women. Men who offer this handshake to a female business associate send the message that they perceive her as female first, business associate second. In other words, it's condescending, and most women I've talked to can't stand this type of

handshake! Women who offer this handshake to either a man or woman are likely to be perceived as weak and ineffective.

Forget what your parents taught you about a “polite” handshake; this is 2015, not 1900. Unless you’re shaking hands with someone’s great-great-grandma, or drinking mint juleps on the veranda at a debutante ball, grasp hands “web to web” using your entire hand.

7. Shake with one hand, not two

Unless you’re a politician who is perceived as standoffish, but is trying to “appear” more friendly and warm — don’t offer a two-handed handshake. Use only your right hand. If you use two hands, you may convey to the other party that you’re trying too hard, or you might make them uncomfortable by being too personal.