

Business Card Tips

- Your business card represents you. It should be in good shape, current and clean; never soiled or tattered.
- Have two cards ready to distribute when you visit an office. Given one to the receptionist when identify yourself to her. Give the second to the person you are meeting.
- During an office visit if the host does not offer a card, as the guest you can request one before leaving. If cards are in a holder, ask first before taking one.
- Carry cards to a social event in case the opportunity to network presents itself, but don't turn a garden party into a sales presentation. In a group or party situation, card exchange should be done in private.
- Don't hand your card out during a meal; wait until it is over. Don't give out cards during a private dinner party unless asked to do so. It blurs the business/social boundaries of the situation.
- Be selective in distributing your cards. It is not professional to pass out your business cards as if you were a dealer at a poker game. You want your card to be respected and valued, which it can't be if it is randomly distributed. An appropriate card exchange most often occurs between 2 individuals at a time.
- Use your card to represent you by enclosing it when forwarding materials. However, it is not appropriate to enclose a business card in correspondence that has personal or emotional content, such as a note of condolence.
- The protocol of exchanging business cards follows that of the handshake. Usually the senior or higher ranking person starts the process. Wait for the senior executive to ask for your card first. It is impolite to ask for the card of someone higher in rank than you are. Think twice before approaching the Chief Executive Officer of your client's corporation and asking for his or her card. Wait to be introduced. It shows respect for both your client and the CEO.
- Make sure your cards are readily available in a pocket or brief case. A card case is a good investment; it keeps your cards neat and adds to your professional demeanor. To avoid fumbling in pockets or purses always keep cards in the same place. A good location is the inside pocket of your suit or jacket.
- Present your card so the print faces the recipient.