

Handshake

There are numerous **opinions on what a handshake can tell** you about someone. Many are floating around the web and in literature. The truth is somewhere between the various opinions. Some **literature will say there is no correlation** between a handshake and character of an individual. They will offer proof that it is a learned behavior and once you learn it, you think it is the right and only way to do it.

If that is true then what of all the science about body language. Has that now been proved untrue as well?

On the other hand, does a certain kind of handshake necessarily always mean we are or are not a certain type of person? Does the firmness take into consideration the weakness from arthritis? What is for certain and **what really matters**, people will judge you by your handshake! There is an etiquette for shaking hands that needs to be followed to advance your career.

"Ninety percent of what we think about a person is determined in the first ninety seconds we meet them." –Anonymous

Do not get hung up on handshake meaning unless it is the meaning you might want to project. Some people believe what they read even if it is wrong.

Personality and the Handshake

First, it can tell a bit about personality. To illustrate, if I get a hand written letter with a Zip plus 4, I know the writer is on the ball, detail oriented, and up to date on current business practice provided they live in a area with a "plus 4." If I ask some one what their "plus 4" is and they don't know or even worse don't know what it is, it tells a little about the person as well.

So what of a hand shake? Well, if a person doesn't know how to give one properly, it speaks of their business etiquette and acumen. It says they may not have not taken the time for self-growth.

What is a Hand Shake?

Although an almost universal form of greeting and almost everyone does it, there are **a few basics**.

If you meet a woman who is around or over 50, a woman who is quite proper and prim, and or perhaps old fashioned, if you're a guy, then allow her to extend her hand to shake first. If she does not extend it, neither should you.

There are currently five universal ways of offering your hand. Three are conventional, one has taken on its own meaning and one has emerged as the normal to the younger crowd.

"How To" Handshake Basics

1. **Palm Vertical** to the ground and extending your arm forward as though you were sawing wood with a hand saw. It sends a message of greetings, I am here for you as you for me. We are equals. **Better** Tilt your hand slightly so that your palm is pointing to the sky. This subtle body language message is humility and that you are there to help and to serve.
2. **Palm Up** ~ I am here to serve you. It can also indicate when first offered, submission or take charge.
3. **Palm Down** ~ This is the authoritative position. You are in charge or in authority. You are there to take the lead, to take care of things, to get the job done. However it can also indicate a controlling personality.
4. **Hand in Hand** ~ Typically your greeter will offer a hand palm up and before shaking starts the second hand sandwiches yours. Sometimes given to show empathy as with the loss of a loved one. It is also given when wanting to demonstrate concern or to convey that you're with a caring individual. It seems to be a favorite of politicians. It conveys familiarity. Do not use it unless you are close to the individual you do it with, you want to leave a bad impression or you are a politician.
5. **The Middle Five** ~ Related to a high five, a mid five fanning of the hand will be offered from the right side of your greeter and will wave in almost as if to clap your hand and then ending in a traditional shake. This is something you will only observe in men in their 20's and younger. Only engage in it if you are familiar or have become known to the person offering it. Remember, others around may note your gestures in this regard as well.

TIPS and TRICKS ~

• The Eyes Have It

Maintain eye contact while engaging in shaking hands. Nothing will communicate self-confidence, sincerity, and camaraderie more than this one gesture.

• The Pressure Is All Mine

The pressure applied in shaking a hand is relative to the culture you're in. In North America, a firm handshake is appropriate. Make it stronger or weaker than a basic firm grasp and you will leave a negative impression.

• Make Mine Dry

Some occasions cause stress and resulting sweaty palms. You won't get a second chance at a first impression. If you're meeting and greeting after a speech, you will want to be remembered for your words and not wet hands. If faced with this challenge, always carry a handkerchief or wipe your hands on your pants to ensure you're remembered for you, and not a damp handshake. Use discretion and grace so that it is not noticed that you had to dry. If you are enjoying a cold beverage, hold it in the left hand until introductions are completed. Wash your hands with soap and water and dry well prior to a meeting. Keep your palms open and out of your pockets.

Other Types of Hand Shakes

Including those above there are other types of handshakes. Meanings are implied. Remember, there are no hard and fast rules here. Bottom line, what do you want to project about yourself. If these have meaning or not, remember that someone may have read up on and imply meaning to your handshake. So use good form.

The Meeting of the Hands

If you were ever young, you probably remember treading into new territories of social norms with a bent toward nonconformity.

Well, today's youth have a new handshake that, due to its nonconformity, is actually healthier than traditional handshakes. It involves both parties making a fist and on meeting and greeting, the fist of each person will meet, knuckles to knuckles. Before there is a meeting of the mind, there is a meeting of the hands.

The slightly older but still from younger generations is the "**wide five**". As if giving each other a middle five hand slap, the hands wave in from the side in a wide arch. When the hands meet, rather than a slap, there is a more traditional shake. Remember, these are going to be the new movers and shakers. Even better, the meeting of the hands is safe, effective, does not spread germs nearly as much as a traditional shaking of hands and is, well, not too weird for older generations. Weird as in fraternity hand shakes.

The Standard Hand Shake

A typical hand shake as described above. Hands are engaged and eye contact made, smiles are exchanged and two to four shakes.

Using Good Form

Raise your hand from your side and extend until webs of both hands meet. Grasp across the palm wrapping fingers around the opposite side from the thumb. Hold firmly. Shake a few times or for about three or four seconds.

What if your hands are full? Rather than risk dropping everything, give a polite nod is considered acceptable. If the other person's hands are full, be kind and don't offer a handshake. Your discernment will be noted and appreciated.

If wearing gloves, remove them.

It is customary to stand if you're caught in an introduction seated.

The Lingering Hand Shake

A standard hand shake with an extra few shakes and holding on for just a few seconds. I find this often happens when old friends meet or with a good bye to someone dear. Between business people, it gives a bit of a chance to communicate positive thoughts.

The Push Off

At the end of the shake, your hand is pushed away. It is subtle but it could be read as a negative message.

The Pull In

The hand shakes results in one pulling the other closer. It speaks of a controlling body language.

The Superior

If offered first palm down, it indicates superiority. It is the body language of a controlling person.

The Lesser

If offered first, palm up, it could indicate humility and being there to serve.

The Finger Cruncher

Rather than grasping across the palm, the fingers are grasped and crushed. It can be painful. The person who does the finger cruncher will say they can't judge their strength but if you watch, they will not shake a woman's hands the same way. It is almost as if it is sport to give pain.

The Bone Cruncher

Much like the finger cruncher, the same vice like grip is around the hand.

The Palm Pincher

This is usually from a woman, and only a few fingers and thumb grasp the palm for the shake.

The Twister

This may start off as a normal shake but ends up with one twisting and putting the other on top. Sometimes it is incorporated with a pull in. It speaks of a controlling personality.

The Dead Fish

This is a cold, sometimes wet, unemotional shaking of hands. It is the definition of apathy.

Mastering the standard handshake can help you progress in your career. Don't get hung up on what it all means unless it is what it could mean about you and the personality you're projecting. If others judge you, may your handshake improve the impression you leave.

One Last Thought

Do not forget the cultural differences from around the world. It would be improper for a woman to offer her hand to some sects of the Jewish Faith.

In some countries, it is normal for men to walk down the street holding hands. Nothing more is meant nor is happening other than they are good friends.

The next time you go to shake someone's hand, think about the impression you are giving others and what you take away from them, all by a simple handshake.

6 Tips To A Proper Handshake

By Matt Peschong, professional career interviewer

Understanding the proper way to shake someone's hand can mean the difference between success and failure in the business environment. Positive or negative reactions are almost instantaneous in the marketing setting and almost always based around first impressions. This is why the firmness or weakness of your handshake, understanding whose hand you're shaking, your dominance, and your eye contact all play an important role.

A limp handshake might make you appear weak or hesitant. An overpowering handshake can stamp you as a manipulator or over dominant. The best handshake is sincere and firm with a confident smile and good eye contact.

Be aware of power distance relationships when meeting someone for the first time from a different geographical or culture than your own. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. Let the person you're meeting determine "space distances" for you. It's always better to be safe so approach with a hidden sense of caution to let the person you're meeting "take the lead" and determine how close or far to come to you for a handshake. Below you'll find several excellent tips that I've been able to jot down over the years.

Proper Handshake Grasp:

In the business setting, whether your a man or a woman you have to express confidence and "shake it like a man". When interlooping your palm and fingers with another individual, be sure to grasp your palm with their palm. Never interlace your fingers with theirs without touching the palm. Be sure your palm grip is firm but not too tight. You can practice your grip with a friend and strangers. Your friends will give you their opinions on your handshake. The best part of shaking a stranger's hand is that you can judge how someone you never met will react to your handshake. Judge their eye movements, their smile (or lack thereof), and body language. Keep working til you get it right.

Shaking Hands Is Not A Contest:

Decades ago, being able to practically break the hand bones of another person when shaking hands was viewed as a sign of strength and confidence. In today's business environment, you might send a person to the hospital if you treat shaking hands like a contest.

Shaking A Woman's Hand:

Keep in mind that shaking a woman's hand should be treated the same as shaking a man's hand. You should clasp palms and match their grip with your own.

Say Something: Never be afraid of the person you're meeting. For example, if you're meeting your future boss and you want to make a good impression say something such as; "Nice to meet you" or "A pleasure to meet you" will do just fine.

Forgetting The Name:

If you forget someone's name and you still want to make that super first impression there's a simple trick. Approaching the individual, extend your hand and offer a warm handshake. Say "(Insert Your Name), glad to see you." By saying you are glad to 'see' them and not 'meet' them you are actually playing a clever mind game that often works to your advantage. Having met you before, by saying 'see' instead of 'meet' you're not implying you forget them entirely. In addition, by offering your name you open a door for them to reciprocate your offering.

Sweaty Palms:

When you release your grip, pause briefly before continuing the conversation. If you believe your hands became sweaty from the palm exchange you should never rub them off on your pants or suit jacket. The other person will think you believe they have sweaty palms and feel offended. Instead, if your palms get sweaty try touching things randomly as you walk around the office or restaurant. For example, you're in the hot seat for an interview. You shake your potential new boss's hand and it's just wet as a dog. Keep that smile pearly white and say how excited you are to meet them. As you sit down, grasp the armrest of the chair and let some of the sweat soak into the upholstery. You can also try putting your hands on your kneecaps and lean forward as-if you were very intrigued with every word they had to say. Then, slowly let your hands rub themselves off your pant legs.

Six Tips for a Perfect Handshake

by Kate Lorenz, Editor for CareerBuilder.com

Science backs up what the etiquette books have been saying all along: A firm handshake helps make a good first impression for both males and females. A July 2000 University of Alabama study found that consistent with the etiquette and business literature, there is a substantial relationship between the features that characterize a firm handshake (strength, vigor, duration, eye contact and completeness of grip) and a favorable first impression.

"Handshakes are the only consistent physical contact we have in the business world. They happen first, so they set the tone for the entire relationship," says Jill Bremer, a professional image consultant and co-author of 'It's Your Move: Dealing Yourself the Best Cards in Life and Work' (Financial Times Prentice Hall). "People make an immediate judgment about your character and level of confidence through your handshake. I have participants pair up and try all sorts of "bad" handshakes -- wet noodle, fingers-only, bonecrusher, two-handed, upper hand - then teach them the right way to do it." Here are some tips from the experts on the perfect handshake.

Be a mover and shaker.

It is appropriate to shake hands in any public business setting -- job interviews, business meetings, thank-you gestures. The proper handshake should be firm, with an energy that communicates sincerity, strength and professionalism, says Dianne M. Daniels, a certified image coach and author of "Polish and Presence: 31 Days to a New Image." The perfect handshake is one that conveys a friendly, welcome attitude. "Generally, the person who extends their hand first has the 'power' in the setting," says Dr. Nancy B. Irwin, a Los Angeles-based psychologist and therapeutic hypnotist. "In our American culture, the handshake shows interest, openness and confidence."

Put them in the palm of your hand.

Dale Webb and Pauline Winick, founders and directors of the Protocol Centre in Miami, Fla. stress the importance of having proper form. Extend your arm with your hand outstretched with thumb straight up. Make sure hands are web-to-web -- slide your hand into the other person's until your webs touch. Give it just two pumps.

Get a grip.

Limp, lifeless handshakes tend to communicate timidity, passivity or intimidation. The "limp fish" and "barely touching" handshakes project a sense of distance and a "don't touch me" attitude, says Daniels. It's hardly welcoming and no one, including women, is exempt from this rule.

Handle it with gloves.

When shaking hands with a more mature person than yourself, Daniels advises to be careful not to squeeze the hand you are offered too tightly -- it could cause pain. This also applies to not rapidly or strongly pumping their arm, as you could cause injury. Many people have allergies, sensitive skin or fragile bones due to health issues, such as carpal tunnel, adds Irwin.

When to go hand in hand.

When shaking hands to congratulate someone, Irwin recommends the double handshake. This is when you "glove" or "sandwich" the other's hand with both of yours and indicates pride, warmth and sharing. "This can overpower or threaten some people," says Irwin, "so one must be careful and use this when they know someone well."

Be a right-hand man or woman.

In today's business environment, both women and men shake hands. The idea of a man waiting for a woman to extend her hand first is outdated, say Webb and Winick, and a woman should extend her hand. What about men? "Save the 'I'm stronger than you' type of grip for non-business situations with friends or competitors," says Daniels. "Exerting yourself to give a stronger-than-normal squeeze to another man is not the way to show your dominance, and can set a confrontational tone for the rest of your association."