



## How DO You Shake a Hand

Some people-- politicians and CEOs--know how to shake hands. Considering that you can make or break a deal--or election--depending upon how well you shake hands, it's important that you learn to shake hands well:

1. **First impressions.** Your handshake will do much to establish a first impression of yourself. Even if your hand is greasy, sweaty or otherwise less-than-presentable, give it a quick swipe, and extend it anyway. Extending a hand is an important symbol of friendship, approachability, trustworthiness and it is all-important in establishing an initial connection with another person. Really, the significance of a handshake cannot be overstated--if you don't have a passable handshake, you aren't getting the job.
2. **Firmness.** This is where men tend to go overboard. In their attempt to convey a powerful presence, men sometimes end up squeezing too hard, which is synonymous with trying too hard. Your handshake should be firm but not so firm that it is uncomfortable. And of course, you need to adjust your grip according to the recipient.....for example, if you are shaking the hand of an elderly person, ease up. Alternatively, you don't want to be a "limp fish" either....this is where practice with friends will come in handy. If you've shaken enough hands (and gotten feedback on the experience), you will develop a natural sense for the appropriate firmness.
3. **Angle.** Think perpendicular. The palm of your hand should be parallel to the hand you are shaking, and perpendicular to the floor. If instead, you put your palm on top, this is the equivalent of one dog mounting another to show his dominance. (And if you do this to your superior, you've just made a very big faux pas.) On the other hand, if your hand is facing up so that his hand is atop yours, you are assuming a submissive pose. By presenting a perpendicular hand that is parallel to the hand you are shaking, you send a message of equality and neutrality.
4. **Eye contact.** You must always look in the eyes of the person whose hand you are shaking. Otherwise, you completely negate the point of shaking hands in the first place and instead send a signal of insincerity or even sneakiness. If you are exquisitely nervous to the point that looking into the other person's eyes might just put you over the edge, you have to do it anyway. It doesn't matter if you are doing the secret handshake of friendship forever, you cannot perform it successfully without looking into the other person's eyes.
5. **Pumping.** Aim for two pumps with one to three pumps as your outer limits. Even if you are trying to convey a sense of warmth, anything longer than that gets awkward. If you want to convey warmth, and it is appropriate to the setting, you can briefly pat the other's hand with your free hand.
6. **Practice.** Think of how you learned to say "please" and "thank you." It took several hundred reminders until the behavior became rote. Practice your handshake with friends until extending your hand is as easy and natural as saying, "Excuse me," when you brush against someone at the supermarket. Friends can also give you feedback on your firmness and pumping action.
7. **Cultural Appropriateness.** If you're traveling in a foreign country, you'll have to do your homework on whether or not a handshake is an appropriate form of greeting, particularly with the opposite gender. In some countries, shaking hands is seen as far too intimate a contact to initiate with a stranger.

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