

MARCH

Respecting Personal Space

Personal space is an understanding of the space and boundaries that make people comfortable. Boundaries of personal space depend on



many factors – individual preference, gender, environment, type of relationship, and culture – but respecting the personal space of your coworkers fosters a sense of safety, respect, order, and comfort in the workplace.

What Is Acceptable Personal Space at Work?

- Never closer than an arm's length.
- 2+ feet for close friends/acquaintances
- 4+ feet for strangers
- 6+ feet when speaking to a group

How Can I Respect Personal Space?

- Only touch a person if you know them well – never strangers or acquaintances.
- Always knock before entering an occupied office or meeting room.
- Don't lean over a person's shoulder to read something unless asked.
- Don't walk behind a person's desk unless invited to do so.
- Don't move or touch items on someone's desk or workspace unless asked.
- Don't use heavily scented products, or play loud music – while not a physical invasion of space, they can affect and disturb the people around you.

What Should I Do if Someone Invades My Personal Space?

- Break eye contact, clear your throat, or briefly stop speaking to indicate you are uncomfortable.
- Lean away or take a step back to indicate you need more space.
- Say that you feel crowded or uncomfortable with how close they are standing.
- If a person persistently invades your space, speak with them about your expectations of having your personal space respected.

