

The Way We Sit & What It Means

Sitting comes easy to us. But the etiquette of sitting down, maybe not. Here's how to take a seat — at work or on a date

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How do you sit? You take a chair and plonk yourself. Sometimes you cross your legs, sometimes maybe the ankle or with your legs in a wide four with the ankle resting on the opposite lower thigh aka the American way of sitting. Apparently every time you take a seat your body is engaging in a non-verbal communication, body language for the simpletons. Now think about the way you sit down and maybe rethink it.

At a Formal Do

Emily Post — the first lady of good manners — talks about the art of sitting gracefully. Her advice: a woman should never cross her legs or sit with legs wide open. The perfect pose is a cross between sitting in an easy yet dignified pose. When sitting in a formal meeting or party, men/women should sit with an erect posture and with poise. **Do:** Sit erect in the middle of the chair with legs in a 90 degree with a gap of 6-7 inches between one's feet or slightly sideways in the corner of a sofa. Women shouldn't cross legs at the knees, especially if they are wearing a skirt or a dress, it can ride up. Instead cross at the ankles. For men, unless it is a deep lounging seat, should lean against the back and put a hand or an elbow on the arm

Never: Scramble for a seat. Having greeted everyone, survey the room discreetly and make your move

At Work

If you are a junior sitting in front of a senior then ideally you should not cross your legs. A complete no-no would be the American style of sitting — basically the ankle resting on the opposite knee in a wide four. That position reflects arrogance and power. A lot of people in the corporate sector make the mistake of sitting in the wide-four style. Only when you want to project power consciously, sit like that. And remember to nod frequently to show you are listening and smile. Your body language should show others that you are attentive, interested and involved in the meeting.

Do: In a meeting, make sure your posture is erect and lean in to show interest in what your senior is saying.

Never: Sit with a slouch or sink in your chair. It reflects disinterest or tiredness and can be construed as an attitude problem.

At a Business Lunch or Dinner

In a business lunch or dinner, if the place cards are missing, then the protocol is that the senior most heads the table and the second in command sits next to him or her. The management trainee would sit towards the end from the CEO on the table. The sitting posture should follow the one in the formal do. At a sit-down dinner, talking across the table is considered a major gaffe. **Do:** Sit up straight with your legs at a 90 degree **Never:** Sit with elbows on the table.

On a Date

If you are in a restaurant, first of all a male should not sit next to the lady, he should sit opposite her. To begin with his posture should be erect as time goes by he can be relaxed but still maintain an erect posture. Maintain a pleasant and expressive face. **Do:** Lean in to show interest — in her and what she's saying **Never:** Stretch out your legs under the table. You might end up hitting her and it can send out a wrong signal.



You Sit: With legs crossed, foot kicking slightly It means: Boredom



You Sit: With legs slightly apart, not wide open It means: Openness, relaxed attitude



You Sit: With legs wide open It means: Arrogance, combative, sexual posturing



You Sit: With hands clasped behind head, legs crossed It means: Confidence, superiority



You Sit: With legs apart but thighs joined at the knee It means: Nervousness



You Sit: With parallel legs together (for women) It means: You are propah, a finishing school grad



You Sit: With locked ankles with knees apart It means: Apprehension, defensiveness



You Sit: With legs intertwined and all twisted, especially for women It means: Insecurity, nervousness



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