

5 rules to post in the break room

In most workplaces, the break room is nothing more than a shared kitchen. It's where all employees go for their midmorning coffee, to reheat last night's lasagna, fill their water bottles or just look for an idle co-worker to chat with.

Here are five simple rules you can use to keep the room pleasurable for all.

1. **Your mother doesn't work here.** In other words, clean up after yourself. That means wipe the sesame seeds and ketchup off the table. That includes the chair, too. Don't leave your empty yogurt cup on the counter with the plastic spoon still in it. There is a garbage can and a recycling bin. Use them.
2. **Learn how to use the microwave.** Seven minutes is way too long for a bag of popcorn. Nothing smells worse than burnt Orville Redenbacher. It lingers. Read the instructions on the bag. In fact, most microwaves have a "Popcorn" button. Also, cover your edibles before you nuke them, and please clean the inside of the unit if your food splatters. No one—and we mean no one—wants to see your split pea soup shrapnel.
3. **It's a refrigerator, not a compost bin.** See No. 1. Don't leave your half-eaten moo goo gai pan in there over the weekend. There's limited room in the fridge, and besides, decomposing food can be toxic.
4. **Take the whole doughnut!** We know. Too many calories in a whole doughnut. But if you cut it in half—or worse yet, tear it—*no one* will eat the other half. Trust us. Take the whole thing and find someone who wants the other half.
5. **If you empty the coffee pot, make a fresh one.** Or shut it off if it's nearly empty, and then clean it. Next to charred popcorn and reheated tuna casserole, burnt coffee at 3 p.m. in the lunch room is offensive.