

# Cubicle etiquette: Don't be a prairie dog

If you've noticed a lack of "cubicle etiquette" around the office lately, distribute the following "good neighbor" checklist to your co-workers.

**Don't "prairie dog."** Walk around the partition to see a neighbor, instead of popping your head over the top. And as you walk down the passageways, don't peek down into each workstation.

**Pretend that workstations have walls.** Don't barge into a work area that has no door. Lightly tap on the wall near the opening or say "Excuse me" to announce your arrival.

**Allow co-workers to complete calls.** Don't try to interrupt with sign language or lurk just outside the cubicle. Drop a note on the desk or return later.

**Grant your neighbors private time.** Stagger lunch breaks to provide everyone a few minutes alone at their desks.

**Move conversations from hallways.** Lead the group you're talking with to a conference room or other common area so you don't disturb co-workers who are trying to concentrate.

**Don't chime in to conversations** you hear over the wall. Whether it's a work question you can answer or a private conversation you'd rather not hear, ignore comments that aren't directed at you.

**Keep lunch in the kitchen.** When you truly can't leave your desk for a meal, choose foods without strong odors, and place your garbage in the kitchen can, not your own wastebasket.

**Turn down the volume.** Mute any sound effects on a screensaver, set your phone ringer on low (and send callers directly to voice mail when you won't be available to pick up the phone), set your personal cell phone to a silent mode and minimize the volume of any computer alarms.

When co-workers don't notice that you're around, you win the good-neighbor award.