

# The COVID Guide to Etiquette ... and Pandemic Politeness



////////// **Featuring** //////////

**How to  
Handle  
Awkward  
Situations**

**What to Do  
And Say to  
Avoid Causing  
Offence**

# Introduction

## What should you do if your friend runs in for a hug? Or someone stands way too close to you?

If you have experienced an awkward social interaction during the pandemic, you're not alone. Research has found that over 80% of people in Scotland have felt awkward when trying to follow the rules, and the majority have worried about appearing rude or hurting someone's feelings.

The 'Covid Guide to Etiquette and Pandemic Politeness', a modern, light-hearted twist on traditional etiquette guides, has been developed to support people to follow the rules and stay safe, and provides tips on what to do and say to avoid creating tension.

A stranger in the supermarket is too close.



# The underpinning principle of the tips

Framing what you say as an **offer** rather than a request will help to reduce tension or offence while still changing the outcome of an encounter.



# Top Tips

- 1 Assume The Best**  
Remember that most people have good intentions, and it's possible that the person has forgotten or misunderstood the current guidance, or are unable to comply with it
- 2 Plan Ahead**  
Think about what you can do to reduce the likelihood of having to deal with an awkward situation
- 4 Make an Offer**  
Making a simple offer can be best, because it can be framed out of care and concern for one another

- 3 A Polite Decline is Fine**  
It's ok to say no and politely decline to do something if you are in a situation where the guidance isn't being followed
- 5 Walk Away (and report if necessary)**  
If someone refuses to comply it's ok to walk away from the situation



## What to do if...

- ▶ **A stranger in the supermarket is way too close, and doesn't maintain a two-metre distance**

Moving away yourself will remove the need for you to say something, since it can be awkward to speak to a stranger. If you still need to say something, remember that the person may not realise they're too close or have forgotten the guidance. Try to say something to remind them.

**“I'll step back and give you some space – it's tricky in busy spaces to keep to 2 metres isn't it?”**



- ▶ **Someone gets too close to you on public transport**

Making a polite offer with care can be all it needs. Remember, the rules are there to protect us all so if the person becomes confrontational it's ok to report it to the nearest staff member.

**“I'm happy to move if that's easier for you?”**

- ▶ **Someone is delivering something to or working in your house**

It can be difficult if someone is doing something for you to ask them to wear a mask or keep their distance. The best thing is to frame what you say as an offer.

**“I'll just step back and give you some space”  
“I'll open the windows to give you some air”  
“I've got spare masks if you need one?”**

▶ **A friend invites you to birthday drinks at their house**

Refusing requests like this from people you are close to is difficult. Try providing a positive reason for declining and offer an alternative.

**“I wouldn’t want to risk infecting you – that would be the worst birthday present ever. Let’s have a birthday zoom and plan a bigger celebration when it’s safe to get together”**



▶ **You’re picking up a coffee when you see a colleague in the coffee shop, and they take off their mask to speak to you**

Always assume that people have the best intentions, and that they may have done it without thinking. It’s best to offer an explanation and an alternative.

**“Shall we catch-up outside where there is space to keep a wee distance?”**



▶ **A family member is way too close when you meet outside for a walk**

They may not have realised they are so close, and often a subtle reminder may be all that is needed. Try to take a step back, and if needed say something to show it is being done out of care.

**“Sorry I know this is a bit odd isn't it, having to stay apart, I'll just move back a little and that'll keep us right”**



▶ **A friend runs in for a hug**

Changing how we say hello to one another isn't easy. Being honest about it can make things easier.

**“I so want to hug you! But I guess we have to wait until it's safe. I don't want to risk harming you or anyone else you are in contact with. I'm giving you a virtual hug”**





**FACE  
COVERINGS**



**AVOID  
CROWDS**



**CLEAN  
HANDS**



**TWO  
METRES**



**SELF-  
ISOLATE**

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