

Coworkers we love to hate

Sometimes it's not the big things that send us over the edge at work; it's often the little things. Every year, CareerBuilder conducts a survey about work annoyances, offering an amusing glimpse of how irritating we can find our colleagues. From coworkers who "eat all the good cookies" and breathe too loudly to those with disconcerting personal habits like having big hair or wearing bells on their shoes, there's a never-ending list of quirky behaviors that drive folks up the wall.

Noisy colleagues always feature prominently in a list of top gripes: loud talkers; singers and whistlers; noisy eaters; slammers, clickers and stompers; people with annoying ring tones; people who play loud music; and those who talk on speakerphones.

The kitchen is another source of frequent complaint: people eating smelly food; those leaving dirty dishes or messes for others to clean up; people who hog the best treats or take the last cup of coffee.

Many behaviors elicit strong disapproval. Some of the annoying "types" that repeatedly top these lists are complainers, chatterers, over-sharers, whiners, tattlers, eavesdroppers, cursers, bullies, know-it-alls, space invaders, disaster mongers, and toadies.

Annoyances are bound to surface when we spend a lot of time in close quarters with other people. That's true of both our coworkers and our families.

One important life skill is developing tolerance of the live-and-let-live variety. "Don't sweat the small stuff" is a rule to live by. But if the behavior is recurring or disruptive to work productivity, we sometimes need to confront it. If so, be friendly but direct, diplomatic and nonjudgmental.



Relate the problem to work: "It's hard to concentrate on writing." Compromise and keep your cool. If it's an issue that affects a lot of people or one you are uncomfortable addressing with the offender, take it up with your supervisor or with Human Resources.

When we think about work annoyances, the natural tendency is to think about habits that *other* people do – but here's a question we should all consider: *Am I the annoying coworker?*

Here are some "work etiquette" rules to help you stay below the annoyance radar:

- Keep a neat, orderly work area
- Respect other people's personal space
- Cooperate with housekeeping in public areas
- Adapt your voice; be conscious of sounds you may be making
- Maintain good personal hygiene
- Avoid heated topics that can lead to arguments
- Avoid gossip and negativity; stay positive
- Opt for kindness and inclusivity
- Avoid whispering with others; it can be assumed you are "talking about" coworkers

Log in to www.EducatorsEAP.com to learn more coping mechanisms for getting along with friends, family and work colleagues. We also have resources for managing stress and anger!