

8 ways to gracefully receive a compliment

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While I was in the check-out line at the grocery store the other day, the customer ahead of me complimented the cashier on her earrings. Instead of saying, “ Thank you,” the cashier replied, “ Aren’t they cute? They’re on sale at Target for \$15. 99.” In other words, she dismissed the compliment and offered information that was not necessary.

This cashier is not unusual. Many of us don’t know how to accept a compliment. And in some cases, we inadvertently insult the person who gives it.

Why does accepting a compliment feel so awkward, causing us to stumble over our words, downplay or even reject it? The problem may lie in the fact that from the time we are children, we are taught to be humble, not cocky or arrogant.

But whenever you downplay or reject the compliment you may be doing more harm than good. A compliment is, after all, a kind of gift, and turning down a gift insults the person giving it, suggesting that you don’t value them as highly as they value you.

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Here are some dos and don’ts that will help you gracefully accept any compliment.

1. Do say 'thank you'.

The rule of thumb when you receive a compliment is to simply and humbly say “ Thank you” or “ Thank you; I appreciate your kind words.” By accepting

the compliment, you show gratitude for the other person's kind remarks and do not come off as vain, bashful or prideful.

2. Do share the compliment.

If someone compliments you and your team, acknowledge the compliment and say that you will pass it along to those team members who helped you do the work or complete the project. This makes everyone feel good.

3. Do receive a toast.

When someone raises a glass in a toast to you, the correct protocol is to nod your head and smile. Do not pick up your glass and drink along with the others following the toast. This is like patting your own back and complimenting yourself. When everyone has taken a sip, feel free to stand and offer a toast in return.

4. Do be mindful of your nonverbal behavior.

Watch your body language as you accept the compliment. Avoid crossed arms, downcast eyes or overly-casual postures that can send a wrong message or indicate disinterest. Lean slightly forward, look the giver in the eyes, and smile as you say "thank you."

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5. Don't get into a compliment battle.

At times, you may feel inclined to "out-compliment" or downplay your work, especially when a compliment comes from someone you respect and admire. This may be appropriate in Asia, but not in the U. S. Fight the urge to one-up someone's sincere praise. Don't say, "Thank you, but I know my input

wasn't nearly as valuable as yours." Instead, embrace the moment and be grateful for the accolade.

6. Don't deny or downplay the compliment.

One of the worst things you can do is deny a compliment. This can come across like a slap in the face to the giver, as it negates their opinions and feelings. An example of this type of interaction might be: " You look really nice today. Is that a new suit you're wearing?" Response: " This old thing? I've had it for years." Or, " You gave a good presentation this morning." Response: " I could have done better. I messed up a few times."

7. Don't question or insult the giver.

When someone offers a compliment, know that it may be coming from his or her heart. When you deny the compliment, it may seem as if you question their taste or insult their judgment as in this example: " You are one of the best speakers I've heard all year." Response: " Really? You must not get out much."

8. Don't milk the compliment.

To gracefully receive a compliment, try not to give responses that attempt to elicit reassurance, like " What makes you think that?" or " Gosh, are you sure?"

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