



How to steer clear of **OFFICE GOSSIP**

Do you know someone at work who loves to gossip? Perhaps they always have some “juicy” information about another person. If you’re just listening, and not talking, then no harm done, right?

Not necessarily. According to the National Ethics Association, workplace gossip can damage employee relationships, decrease morale at work and even harm someone’s career. If you engage in the gossip, you may lose credibility with important people and create conflict. But how do you cut gossip out of your professional life?

- Identify the main source of gossip and avoid him or her. If you work in a larger office, you may be able to stay out of this person’s path. If your workplace is small, this may be more challenging.

Try shutting your door when you know that person is around, or simply busy yourself with work. If approached, you can say, “I’m sorry, I can’t talk now. I have to get this project done right away.”

- If you get cornered and don’t know how to respond, it’s sometimes best to just be silent. If you don’t react or respond to the gossip, the other person will quickly get bored or learn you’re not interested.
- If these tactics don’t work and the person continues to try to pull you in, you may need to be more direct — but polite. Don’t accuse or start an argument. Instead, you could say, “I don’t think we should talk about this. I prefer to focus on my work, and not worry about other people.”

- If it’s you who tends to talk about others, adopt a personal policy to stop. Talking about others’ personal or professional business is almost always inappropriate, and does not help you or your co-workers. Think of the reverse: would you want someone gossiping about you? Find upbeat, interesting things to talk about around the water cooler, such as how each person’s family is doing, or what their plans are for the weekend.

The first few times you have to stop office gossip can be hard. Stick to it, and over time, you will find that it gets easier. Eventually, you’ll stop being a magnet for the negative conversations. Your productivity at work will likely improve, and you may feel better about yourself and those you work with.