

Technology Etiquette for Football Fans

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

Q: Our favorite fall activities revolve around tailgating and attending college football games. We usually have a lot of fun but there are times when spectator behavior is out-of-control and puts a damper on our good time such as when people blast their portable radios. What advice would you give to football fans that use technology?

A: Blazing new trails in technology etiquette has been a challenge. Addressing this very issue, ESPN football analyst and former NFL quarterback Joe Theismann thinks that fans should show sportsmanship in the stands just as the players are expected to do on the field. He hopes that fans will use their heads when it comes to technology rather than force stadiums to regulate its usage. Theismann admonishes, “Go ahead and use the tech gadgets but be courteous and use some common sense. Anything else is truly ‘unsportsmanlike conduct.’”

While technology can enhance the enjoyment of a live football game, its misuse can take away from the spectator’s overall experience just as in the situation you described. Commentary on portable radios can be useful, but you should be the only one who can hear it – use a headset. If you use a portable TV for instant replays, keep the volume down. You can show courtesy to those around you by sharing the view of the replay. You never know whom you might disarm and befriend during a game!

Flash photography is another annoyance during any public event. Save those shots for before and after the game or during breaks and time-outs. If you decide to stand up to take a non-flash photo, be careful of blocking the view of those seated behind you especially if you are in front of parents who have a player on the field!

Also, at the start of the game, remember to put your cell phone ring on vibrate and resist talking on it during the game. However, it would not be out of the question to let someone know that you will be delayed because the game is in overtime.

Whether or not you know it, using a personal digital assistant (PDA) in public can be both distracting and offensive to those around you. It is okay to check a stat once in a while, but you are there for a social event which involves watching the football game. When you are glued to your PDA, you are ignoring those who are with you. The message you convey is that you’re bored or your family and friends aren’t very important.

Portable technology devices are more abundant than ever. Everybody’s using the latest and greatest personal gadgets to stay connected and make life more pleasurable. Because technology etiquette has been slow to evolve, the rules are mostly unwritten. But, if we plug in our common sense and show sportsmanlike conduct by being courteous toward others, it can be a win-win situation for everybody.

Email your etiquette questions to Jill at: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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