

Tips for Succeeding at Professional Social Events

Being Invited

- If you receive a formal event invitation, be sure to respond in a timely manner and according to the RSVP instructions.
- Prior to the event if you have not received an update or reminder, contact the host to verify date, time, location, and any related items such as dress code.
- If you are uncertain as to where the event is located, visit the location prior to the event to avoid getting lost the date of the event.

Arriving at the Event

- Show up on time.
- Wear your name tag on your right side. It can be read more easily by another person as you shake hands.
- Use an “official title” (e.g., Dr. Smith) when greeting someone, even if you know the individual personally.
- When introducing executives, begin with the highest-ranking person.
- Make sure that you hear the person’s name. If not, ask to have the name repeated.
- To remember a name after an introduction, repeat it several times during the conversation. In addition, try to associate the name with something about that person.
- Make immediate eye contact and smile when introduced.
- Always shake hands from a standing position.
- Hold the other person’s hand for a split second longer when shaking hands. This conveys confidence and pleasure in meeting the person.
- Whenever possible, volunteer your name first. This demonstrates friendly confidence.

Socializing

- Eye contact is the best way to develop rapport with others. Direct eye contact conveys your interest, attention, confidence, support, and honesty.
- If others order alcoholic beverages, don’t feel obliged to order one also.
- Avoid topics that may lead to conflict or be inappropriate, such as politics, gossip, religion, off-color jokes, gender issues, and personal questions, i.e., age, weight, marital status and health.
- Avoid using cellular phones while socializing. Excuse yourself and use the phone in private. Silence the ringer or turn off the phone during presentations.

Dining

- Say “please” and “thank you” when interacting with staff.
- Once seated, place your napkin in your lap. Put it on your chair when leaving the table temporarily. When finished eating, place your napkin to the left side of your plate.
- Cutlery should be used starting from the outside in.
- The bread plate is located on the left side. If you start the breadbasket, always pass it to your right. Help yourself after the basket has circulated around the table.
- Your water glass, coffee cup, and other glassware are located on the right. A wine glass should be held by the stem and not by the bowl.
- When someone requests salt or pepper, always pass both items.
- Wait for the host to begin eating or start when invited by the host to do so. Do not begin until everyone at your table is served.

Ending the Event

- Prior to leaving, be sure to thank the host, and any representatives affiliated with the host.
- If you plan to stay in contact with the host, obtain a business card before you leave.
- If you intend to maintain a professional relationship with the host, follow up with an email thank you note.