

Official Party etiquette

Introduction

Your company has decided to throw a party. The invitees may be external or internal, depending on the occasion. You may be invited to the party merely to attend or to act as a host and help out not only in the prior arrangements but also during the party. If you have gone through the section on arranging a meeting, you'd have a fair idea of the spirit behind asking you to help in arrangement. You'd need to volunteer for a definite part to be performed and then stick to it. Do your bit faithfully and with a view to excel. Remember that in this section, I'll spell out things to do as both host and guest.

Acting as a host or guest?

If you are the host, then do remember to come adequately earlier than the start time of the party. This will vary depending on the role you are playing. If you are the guest, please arrive right on time. A leeway of more than two-three minutes after the given time is not acceptable. Do not arrive before time. A good trick to achieve this is to arrive five-ten minutes before time and take your own time in parking the car slowly, checking your dress/ make-up etc. and then time your entry at the perfect time.

Welcoming guests

Clarify with your party coordinator if guests need to be welcomed and escorted. Usually this is done only for important external visitors, press and media or VIPs of your own organization. However in parties where investors or venture capitalists have been invited, you need to know whether or not your company wants them to be welcomed formally and escorted.

Formal welcome does not mean that you'll put garlands around their neck or do an *aarti* with a lighted lamp. That is way too corny anyway. It's usually adequate to merely be present near the entry. Upon seeing the arrival of the guest, meet him/her pleasantly, shake hands and introduce the place to them in two or three short sentences. They may then be handed over to their chaperone; or they may carry on independently.

Making Introductions

See Section on Meeting People

Looking after guests

The occasion may demand that each guest be looked after. However, there are always some rather important guests who must be looked after special-

ly. It is a good practice to assign a chaperone or escort to them. Under normal circumstances, a junior employee of the company, who has good grooming and is well dressed, is allocated as a chaperone. For top notch guests, allocate one chaperone per person. Man and wife should be given separate chaperones, preferably of the respective gender. Some people prefer chaperones of opposite gender; this is flexible and it must be kept in mind that the guests are sometimes uncomfortable with chaperones of opposite gender in Indian settings and may hesitate in asking for more drinks or for the way to the toilet.

Guests of lesser importance may have a shared chaperone. It is essential for the chaperone to see that each guest gets the drink of his choice, has refills, is taken to appropriate places in the party location and is seated at the rightly allocated seat. Chaperone will also be responsible to make introduction where needed.

Smoking

Smoking in public places is illegal in India now. So keep the law in mind before allowing or disallowing smoking. If you can legally allow smoking then it's better to keep a smoking zone separate from non-smoking zone to allow for the comfort of non-smokers. For both men and women, it'd be a good practice to seek permission from people sitting next to you before starting, lest someone is uncomfortable. Even if one person is uncomfortable, it is against the etiquette to smoke.

Drinking alcohol

Drinking alcohol has been the bane of many a brilliant person. It has brought down more careers than made. And yet, it's a powerful and most sought after tool in professional and social settings. In India, drinking alcohol is not a traditional thing for most families. It is not served with traditional Indian food. Therefore it is not surprising that most Indians lack the understanding of alcohol etiquette and do not appreciate the finer aspects of this subject. Moreover, in general, drinking in India is looked down upon and therefore has certain amount of guilt associated with drinking.

Though the trend is on the rise in corporate sector, the proportion of women accepting alcoholic beverages still remains abysmally low compared to the proportion of men who consume alcohol. However this should not deter you from asking the ladies if they wish to have an alcohol based drink or cocktail.

Types of alcohol: Depending on various factors, you may be offered pure wines, rum, whisky, beer etc. or a cocktail. Indian cocktails may be drastically different from western ones. The worst I have had is vodka stirred with yoghurt and a dash of lime. It may be a good idea to ask about the contents of a cocktail lest you are allergic to one or more of them. If you are unsure, stick to simple drinks like whisky, gin or rum.