

SCHMOOZING AND BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

SCHMOOZING

Schmoozing is an interpersonal communication style and a skill, a way of connecting with people and developing relationships through comfortable and pleasurable conversation.

Schmoozing is more casual and informal than networking and is a way of making new friends. Schmoozers do not ask for favors or look for advantage points but have unlimited opportunities to learn about current trends and people in the marketplace.

Schmoozers know how to build rapport, how to be good listeners, and how to practice patience. Good schmoozers have a sincere interest in people.

Schmoozers engage in small talk-- pleasant chatting about everyday happenings like the weather, travel, sports, and the immediate surroundings—never politics, religion, and sex—to establish a common ground.

SCHMOOZING SUGGESTIONS

One-half of all Americans identify themselves as being shy and self-conscious in public when meeting strangers, and 75% are nervous before a business-social event.

In preparation, you might ask your friends to answer, “What do you think is interesting about me? What was your first impression of me?” Think about your hobbies, how you spend your free time, and what you like to read.

Get some exercise, which can be an instant mood elevator.

Now, let’s go to the event:

- First, do your homework and research who will be at the gathering; have a personal agenda in going to any function—what message do you want to send about yourself?
- Calm down; remember most people feel awkward in this situation.
- Show a self-confident and optimistic attitude: if you don’t feel it, fake it!
- Arrive promptly; walk with energy and poise.
- Mix both with people you know and you don’t know; standing around and talking with your friends will make you more nervous, and frustrated, because you are not engaging with those who could add to your networking web.
- Be open to different age groups, ethnicities, and social backgrounds.
- Wear your nametag with large, legible letters on the right side, so the person you are meeting can see your name easily when reaching to shake hands.
- Take the initiative and be the first to say, “Hello!”
- Connect with others: make eye contact, show a welcoming smile, say your name clearly, and offer to shake hands with a professional, confident and firm grip.
- Smile with your whole face: pretend you are seeing a good friend or beloved family member.

- Make your first ten words count and use names if possible: “What a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Smith!” Use the formal name until instructed otherwise by that person. If you are introducing two people, say the name of the person with rank first.
- Listen carefully, and ask for name pronunciations. If needed, repeat the names, and then write them phonetically on their business cards when you are away from the group.
- Use the person’s name often in your conversation: people enjoy and appreciate hearing their names. If you have trouble remembering, try mnemonics, using word associations and connections to help you fix the name in your mind.
- Focus on the person with whom you are speaking to show your genuine interest.
- Pay attention to distracting non-verbal behavior. Avoid covering your mouth, playing with your hair, hiding your hands, chewing gum, clearing your throat, fidgeting, and slouching.
- Concentrate and remember the names of people you meet and the content and facts of your conversations: follow-up is part of schmoozing. Many corporate leaders and politicians use a system of making notes on a file card immediately after the meeting and then entering this information on their personal computers.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Excellent schmoozers are excellent listeners. Listening is more than hearing words or waiting patiently for your turn to talk. Listening is an active, learned skill.

Excellent schmoozers are not afraid of silence. Excellent schmoozers are adept at rephrasing someone’s comments and at asking follow-up questions to assure understanding and to bring others into the conversation.

Excellent schmoozers are listening even as they speak by watching the non-verbal behavior of others.

TIPS

1. Listen politely with your “dating face” and bring others into the conversation: use eye contact, smiling, nodding, and quiet verbal responses like “I agree!” to reinforce your interest. Keep your body relaxed and flexible; do not cross your arms or hide your hands.
2. Have an overall demeanor and tone that is engaging, upbeat, and light.
3. Ask open-ended, rather than “yes-or-no,” questions. Ask "who, what, when, or where" questions. Practice questions which will bring positive responses.
4. Work on developing a sincere curiosity in what others are saying; pretending interest will brand you as a phony. Concentrate on what is being said and do not give in to distractions around you.
5. Do not jump into and over the words being said; count to two before you begin speaking.
6. Paraphrase or reiterate what was just said--you will be seen as a good listener and others will listen better to what you have to say.
7. Talk about yourself only when asked directly and remain silent when you know nothing about the topic of discussion!

8. Make sure your speaking voice is clear and at an appropriate level, not too loud or not too soft.
9. Say, if you want to leave your small group, that you are thirsty or hungry and that you would like more refreshments; then, break eye contact. Leave after you have spoken rather than while someone else is talking.
10. Study body language to make sure you will be welcome to enter a group already in conversation; then, make eye contact with someone in the group; and be a good listener before you add your comments.

GROOMING TIPS

Your first visual impression is important.

- Keep your hair clean, neat, and flattering to your facial contours: make sure your hair is controlled, out of your eyes, and, if you dye your hair, make sure you have no other-color roots showing.
- Avoid after-shave cologne or perfume which carries beyond your own nose.
- Wear appropriate jewelry: men may wear a watch and school ring, and women may wear small earrings, a watch, a ring, a simple necklace or pin--nothing dangling or noisy. Use “The Rule of Thirteen”: count every item of accessories—including buttons—and stop at 13.
- Make sure your clothing and shoes fit properly and are comfortable.
- Make sure your shoes are polished and have full, neat heels.
- Have appropriate professional clothing ready:
- **MEN:** choose navy or dark gray, single-breasted suits; wear a properly ironed white shirt with a conservative tie which when knotted reaches the top of your belt buckle; be sure you can place your index finger between your collar and your neck; match your belt and shoes in black or burgundy; and make sure your socks are over-the-calf.
 - **WOMEN:** choose suits of navy, gray, burgundy, or black and classic pumps with low-to-medium heels; wear nude hose; select a hem length to hit slightly above the knee or above mid-calf; carry a purse that is conservative and manageable in size, and note that many businesswomen do not carry a pocketbook at all.
- Be aware that “business-casual” can mean a range of choices: for men, blazers, gray-flannel slacks, and shirts and ties to polo shirts and crisply ironed khakis and, for women, conservative dresses to pantsuits and relaxed blouses. Be smart! Prepare by asking what the standard for that company means, and remember, of course, you always can adapt your clothing if you are too formal when you arrive on the scene.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Receptions

1. Eat before a professional event so you do not arrive hungry. Hors d'oeuvres are not meant to be dinner. For instance, if a reception has a buffet, take a reasonable and manageable portion of food. Return for seconds only if indicated by host or the type of reception.
2. Never dunk a chip, cracker, or cut vegetable into the dip; put the dip and the chips onto your plate.

3. Choose between holding a drink and holding a plate of food because juggling is awkward. Enclose the drink in your left hand so your right will be free for shaking hands.
4. Do not talk while you are chewing or swallowing!
5. Ask yourself whether you should drink alcoholic beverages. The point of a business social is business. You must be in control over your speech, face, body, and tongue at all times. If you choose not to have alcohol, hold a glass of something, so you do not have to address the subject over and over.
6. Do not drink beer from a bottle.
7. Schmoozing is not romancing—save flirtation for other venues.

Dinners

Table manners say a lot about your polish, your maturity, and your ability to conduct business in a professional way. The main purposes of a business meal are to build rapport, develop relationships, and, perhaps, make the sale.

Common sense should rule your actions, and a good sense of humor will go a long way.

1. Assume the employer will pay if the company initiated the contact, but you should be ready with personal cash and a credit card, especially if the meal is an informal breakfast or a lunch with junior colleague.
2. Agree on a meeting place, whether in a hotel lobby, the restaurant lounge, or at the table.
3. Take note that you are always in the public eye.
4. Let your host gesture the seating arrangement.
5. Wait until everyone comes before requesting a beverage.
6. Place your napkin on your lap as soon as everyone is seated. Simply open the napkin; do not flap or wave it. At the very end of the meal, place your napkin to the right of your place setting.
7. Order only the basic meal: salad, main dish, and beverage; then, let your host guide you about appetizers and dessert.
8. Determine the appropriate price range by asking your host, "What do you recommend?" Do not order the most or least expensive or the most exotic main dish. Do not order spaghetti, pizza, French onion soup, fish with bones, pick-up chicken, or any other food which requires fingers or a bib.
9. Be decisive about your choice.
10. Wait until all are served before you begin eating.
11. Know the arrangement of china place settings: solid food like bread is to your left and liquids are to your right.
12. Select your utensils for different courses from the outside to the inside, beginning with the salad fork or soup spoon. The dessert fork or spoon is usually above your dinner plate.
13. In a prearranged meal, always accept the course from the waiter even if you do not like the food. Do not call attention to yourself, and simply arrange your silverware across the place setting or bowl as if you were finished, so your meal companions feel comfortable.

14. Wait to eat your salad until everyone is served. In some places, the salad follows the main course. You may cut iceberg lettuce with a knife. To handle an olive and its pit, follow the saying “whatever goes in with a utensil, goes out with a utensil.”
15. Cover the lemon with your hand before you squeeze into your tea or onto your seafood.
16. Cut and eat one manageable piece of food at a time. Use a fork and knife for the main course only.
17. Tear off a bite-sized piece of bread, including rolls, before buttering. Do not cut the roll in half and butter the entire half. If the butter comes in a wrapper, leave the butter in the wrapper on the plate and let soften. Do not mop up gravy or sauce with your bread.
18. Offer community food like sugar and salad dressing to others at the table before you help yourself. Always keep the salt and pepper together, and pass all food to the right.
19. Synchronize and maintain the same pace of eating as your host and other guests.
20. Chew and swallow before you speak.
21. Keep your elbows off the table.
22. Do not chew ice.
23. Coffee at a business meal is an after-meal beverage.
24. Do not dust crumbs away; leave that to the staff.
25. When you have completed a course, place the fork handle to the right with the tines down and place the knife next to it.
26. Be polite and thank the server each time you have an interaction but do not break the conversation at the table.
27. Do not smoke.
28. Do not blow your nose at the table. If you cough, be as discreet and inoffensive as possible. If you must excuse yourself during the meal, do so between courses.
29. Do not ask for a doggy bag.
30. Thank the host.