

Protocol for the Modern Diplomat

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INTRODUCTION

Few things are as anxiety provoking for the first-time embassy or mission employee or family member as the notion of diplomatic protocol. Protocol can sound both stuffy and mysterious at the same time; and most of us believe we have had little experience in our non-government lives to prepare us. In fact, the rules and processes of diplomatic protocol are based in pragmatic thinking, common sense, and good manners—areas where we all have had some experience.

Protocol makes the job of representing our nation easier by facilitating our work as a mission team, making our relationships and interactions within the diplomatic and host country communities more predictable, and by providing a basic social framework and hierarchy to follow.

We've designed this booklet to help you begin to master the basics of diplomatic protocol. Whether you are an employee or spouse, have few representational responsibilities or are running your post's protocol office, this booklet is a good starting point for you. The booklet's four main sections deal with international culture, U.S. mission culture, the host-country culture, and entertaining. A bibliography and diplomatic glossary are included at the end of the text.

Our sincere hope is that you take the time to read through *Protocol for the Modern Diplomat*, and make a point of adopting and practicing this art and craft during your overseas assignment. We believe doing so will make you more personally effective overseas, and thereby make our missions more effective.

Ray S. Leki
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I. INTERNATIONAL CULTURE

At gatherings that include representatives from the host country as well as from other countries, the timeless formality of international diplomatic culture remains in place. It ensures that each country will be respected uniformly and without bias. The necessary respect is expressed most visibly through spoken courtesies. Below are some tips on how to address and introduce diplomatic representatives.

Addressing Others

Although guidelines exist, proper forms of address vary greatly from culture to culture. Be sure to check local customs, but a few general rules follow.

The spirit of formality among diplomatic representatives usually means not addressing others by their first names as quickly as is done in the United States. One should rely on courtesy titles until invited to do otherwise. Socially, one can refer to a spouse by his/her first name or as "my husband," or "my wife" rather than as "Mr./Mrs. Smith." When dealing with household employees however, you should still refer to your spouse as "Mr./Mrs. Smith."

Ambassadors are addressed as Mr./Madam Ambassador or Ambassador Jones. Only by special invitation or long friendship should one address an ambassador by first name and then only when not in the public eye. In indirect address, refer to the ambassador as "the ambassador", with his/her spouse as "the ambassador and Mr./Mrs. Jones," or if the ambassador's spouse is a woman who kept her maiden name after marriage, "the ambassador and his wife, Ms. Smith." An ambassador of the United States may continue to be addressed as "Mr./Madam Ambassador" after retirement or after returning from his/her duties abroad. In some French-speaking countries, the wife of the ambassador may be referred to as Madam Ambassador. Therefore, in those countries, refer to a female ambassador by her last name (Ambassador Jones) to avoid confusion and ensure that she receives her due respect.

Those of rank below Ambassador are addressed as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., if marital status is known.

When referring to a U.S. post, "the Embassy of the United States of America" is preferred over "the American Embassy." As references to America can be ambiguous, especially in the Western Hemisphere, avoid using terms such as "American ambassador" or "American citizen." Similarly, to be clear and to avoid offending others by suggesting that the US constitutes the entire continent, use "United States" in all references to this country.

Introductions

The purpose of making introductions is to exchange names between people so that a conversation can follow. For a formal occasion, the traditional "Mrs. Smith, may I present Mr. Jones?" is used internationally. For less formal occasions simply stating the two names, "Mrs. Smith, Mr. Jones," is acceptable. Making personal introductions (i.e., introducing oneself) is perfectly acceptable and encouraged. Adding context about yourself and your role is helpful. For example, "Hello, I'm Jane Smith, Vice Consul at the United States Embassy." In English, the accepted, formal response to any introduction is, "How do you do?" Informally, a smile, "Hello," or, "It's nice to meet you," are fine. Other languages have very particular phrases, so be sure to learn them upon arriving at post.

When making introductions, honor is recognized by the name spoken first. Courtesy gives honor to those who are older, higher in rank, titled, have a professional status, or are female. To make the introductions more pleasant, tell each individual a bit of information about the other. This encourages the conversation to continue.

As they do when a woman enters the room, men should rise when being introduced to a woman. In some countries, a man kisses a married woman's hand. Men also rise when being introduced to another man. Women should rise when being introduced to another woman for whom she wishes to show great respect, such as the hostess, a very distinguished woman, or much older woman. In some countries, women rise when introduced to all others.

Throughout the world, greeting and leave-taking customs may include handshakes, salutatory gestures or other specific expressions. If there is such a tradition, use it with host country nationals, foreigners and fellow staff members. Failure to abide with tradition may be interpreted as rudeness or a lack of respect for colleagues.

The best and most courteous way to handle recognizing someone without recalling his or her name is to mention your name again. For example, "Good evening, I'm Jim Smith. We met recently at the ambassador's home. I'm pleased to see you again." More than likely, he/she will reintroduce himself/herself. Starting from the assumption that he/she may also not remember your name could save both of you potential embarrassment.

Titles

Forms of address for foreign government officials and people holding professional, ecclesiastical, or traditional titles vary among countries. The correct local usage can be verified at post. Following are titles for U.S. and some foreign officials that are widely used in both spoken and written address. It is appropriate to begin letters and refer to others directly and indirectly with the following titles.

Diplomatic Titles

Chiefs of Mission

- Mr./Madam Ambassador (this also applies to an ambassador with a military title), or Ambassador Reed.*
- Sir Richard—British ambassador who is a knight (Sir Richard's wife would be addressed as "Lady Smith.")
- Lord Montgomery—British ambassador who is a baron
- Mr./Mrs. Douglas or Ms. Williams—the ambassador's spouse

Chargé d'Affaires

- Mr./Ms./Mrs./Madam Randal

Ministers and Others

- Mr./Madam Taylor

* Special note should be made of how to address ambassadors. Over the years, and recently as well, there has been discussion about the use of the honorific title of Ambassador by former ambassadors, both those who remain active in the Foreign Service and those who are retired. For years, Department regulations have forbidden this usage unless actually in the job of ambassador or for those few who retired with the personal rank of career Ambassador.

For current employees, long-standing custom and practice, however, has established a clear tradition in the Department and in the Foreign Service that persons who have served as ambassador after Senate confirmation may continue to use the title after such service in appropriate communications with others, may be referred to in communications and conversations by the title of Ambassador, and may be introduced to public audiences by the title.

The Department has also clarified the use of the title for persons who have retired from the Foreign Service or left government service who served as ambassador after Senate confirmation. An amendment to the various regulations permits the use of the title, "Ambassador, Retired," for all such persons.

Although the United States does not use the term, "Excellency," some countries do when referring to ambassadors. Even if the host country uses the term "Excellency," American chiefs of mission in those countries are addressed as "Mr./Madam Ambassador" by U.S. citizens. Foreign chiefs of mission who are accredited to the US are also referred to as ambassadors.

U.S. Government Titles

In most cases, the spouse of a government official does not share the official's title with his/her spouse (i.e., the President's spouse is Mr./Mrs. Washington or Ms. Lincoln).

Executive Branch

- Mr./Madam President
- Mr./Madame Vice President
- All members of the cabinet are addressed as Mr./Madam Secretary except Mr./Madam Attorney General

Below the rank of Secretary, U.S. Government officials are addressed by their own name: Mr./Madam Reynolds, not Mr./Madam Undersecretary.

Judicial Branch

- Mr./Madam Chief Justice
- Mr./Madam Justice

Legislative Branch

Senate—Senator Williams

House—Mr./Madam Speaker of the House, and Mr./Madam Williams for a state representative. The titles "Congressman" and "Congresswoman" are becoming more common in social usage, but are not, strictly speaking, correct forms of address.

State Government Titles

- Governor Adley
- Mayor Scott or Mr./Madam Mayor

II. U.S. MISSION CULTURE

While less formal than interactions at international functions, mission behavior is also governed by specific guidelines. Following these guidelines ensures a pleasant working environment and efficient mission operation.

Before Arrival

It is a long-standing custom to write to the chief of mission at your new post when you find out about your assignment. This letter should express your interest in the new assignment and offer your services before your departure. Writing to your new supervisor is a thoughtful, although not required, gesture. If writing to a new supervisor, a letter is the traditional form, but using technology such as e-mail messages is often acceptable as well. The once-common practice of newly assigned spouses writing to the principal officer's spouse is now rather unusual and generally not expected.

The administrative staff will need to know about the details of your arrival. Administrative staff members will help you with specific arrangements for housing, shipping belongings and any other logistical matters. The person you will be replacing is also a valuable resource and you should consider contacting him/her for advice.

Arriving at Post

You should make the post aware of your travel plans so arrangements can be made to meet you, help you through customs, and provide transportation to a hotel, temporary or assigned housing. Many posts assign a sponsor to meet newcomers at the airport, look after their immediate needs and introduce them to the mission community.

As a general rule, you will meet with an administrative or personnel officer at post soon after arrival. Most newly arrived officers are expected to advise the mission upon arrival either by phone or in person. However, the next business day is also acceptable at many posts.

Welcoming

Each post has its own traditional way of greeting newcomers and introducing them to other members of the mission. A personnel officer or an orientation packet will explain this process. Usually, the employee will be introduced to senior officers and colleagues at the office, but family members may meet members of the mission community in a variety of ways. Individuals or couples may call on you (the employee), you may call on them, parties may be planned, or the post may sponsor periodic receptions for arriving and departing families. These events are designed to help ease your family's transition. The employee and the family will benefit from participation in these customary welcoming procedures.

Making Calls

The purpose of making calls is to introduce yourself at post. The more people you meet, the more likely you are to be comfortable and successful in a new assignment. There are two different kinds of calls: office (also known as official) calls and social calls. Office calls are actually face-to-face meetings, not telephonic contacts, and take place in the office or residence of the person being called upon. Office calls continue to be the primary way of meeting the individuals with whom the employee will be working. Social calls, or personal visits to another's home, are still made at some posts but informal introductory social functions, phone calls, and invitations are used more often as a way of getting acquainted. In the past, both types of calls involved the exchange of social calling cards but this gesture has mostly been replaced in business settings with the exchange of business cards and almost entirely eliminated in social settings. Be sure that you are following your mission's customs. If the post has a protocol officer, check with him/her for details. If not, consult your sponsor or supervisor for guidance.

Office Calls

New members of the staff should call upon the Ambassador or principal officer within two working days. Usually, new employees are taken around the mission to see the facility and meet colleagues on the first day. This introductory tour often serves the purpose of the "call on colleagues"; another may not be necessary. If, for some reason, you are not introduced to others, ask whether it would be appropriate for you to make appointments to introduce yourself. You will not need to use calling cards for the calls you make within the U.S. mission.

If your new position requires that you deal with the host country government or with its citizens, you should make appointments to meet them in their offices. Often, chiefs of mission are expected to make office calls upon all other foreign chiefs of mission in order of diplomatic precedence. Other officers are not expected to call on their counterparts at other missions, although they may decide to do so. If you do make such calls, you may ask a co-worker who is already acquainted with the other person to accompany you as a means of formal introduction. Official calling cards may or may not be used depending on local customs, but business cards will probably be exchanged. Colleagues at post can usually suggest the names and positions of the individuals to be called upon.

A third-person diplomatic note to the host country generated in the post's personnel office may announce the arrival of new officers, usually high-ranking officials. Others are announced when the mission issues its biannual diplomatic list. However, officers serving at smaller posts often find that their pending arrival is widely known and/or eagerly anticipated, so do not assume anonymity based on rank.

The *Foreign Affairs Manual* (Volume 2) contains more information about when calls are expected, such as special occasions, national holidays, military visits, the deaths of dignitaries, and on visits to the capital of a third country.

Social Calls

A social call is a visit to the home of the person being called upon. Although becoming less common, some countries' customs may continue to require formal social calls as the employee's primary method of meeting both business and social associates. Since the custom has been virtually abandoned in the United States, you may not be familiar with how it is done. A few guidelines for practicing the art of making a social call follow.

One call, either official or social, may satisfy the requisite need to make a call in both instances. Although spouses have no obligation to make either official or social calls, it is acceptable for them to accompany the employee on social calls. If the spouse chooses, he or she may make a social call alone upon the spouses of the employee's colleagues, either within or outside the mission environment. In some cultures, social calls for the employee and/or spouse are considered obligatory. Check with post for local practices. When making an appointment for a social call, indicate if a colleague or spouse will accompany you. Children are generally not included unless specifically invited. Stay no longer than approximately 20 minutes unless urged to do so by the host(ess).

According to strict protocol rules, social calls that foreign colleagues make on the employee and/or spouse are returned within a week or two. However, depending upon local custom, social calls may or may not require return calls. Check with post for guidance. Acknowledging calls from people within the U.S. mission is less formal and often as simple as inviting the person who called to your *next* social function.

Check with the protocol officer or Community Liaison Officer at post about possibilities for informally meeting other U.S. families. Generally, established families introduce themselves to newcomers and include them in planned activities rather than engaging in formal social calls or exchanging calling cards.

Business Cards

The traditional calling card that bears *only* one's name and title, if appropriate, has yielded to the more versatile business card. The business card may include one's name, rank or diplomatic title, office or section, business address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Business cards *do not* have prefixes, i.e., Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr. (MD or PhD would follow the name when appropriate.) Military ranks and Ambassador do precede the name.

While there are no strict guidelines for family members, the general consensus is that business cards are a classy way to exchange information for all. It may be that the family member has taken a leave of absence from a job in the United States but still has professional interests.

It is wise to seek advice from the Security Office at post about what information should be printed on the card. There should be no reference to the embassy unless that is the only address or phone number that Security advises using. A family member is not entitled to display a USG crest on the card but the member may wish to have a picture or appropriate emblem on it. Prefixes such as Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr. are never used on business cards.

Responsibilities at Post

A U.S. ambassador serving abroad symbolizes the sovereignty of the United States and serves as the personal representative of the President of the United States. Ambassadorial duties include negotiating agreements, reporting on political, economic and social conditions, advising on policy options, protecting American interests, and coordinating the activities of all U.S. Government agencies and personnel in the country. By virtue of the position, Ambassadors at post rely on the support of and are afforded special courtesies by the entire mission staff. These courtesies apply to the ambassadors of other countries as well.

In direct conversation, address an ambassador as Mr./Madam Ambassador or Ambassador Jones. His/her spouse should be referred to as Mr./Mrs. Jones or Ms. Smith, if the spouse is a woman who kept her maiden name after marriage. It is proper to rise when an ambassador and/or his/her spouse enters a room just as you would for the chief of state. When making introductions to an ambassador, everyone but a chief of state is presented to him/her. In other words, the ambassador's name and title is stated first, then the person being introduced. An ambassador and his/her spouse precede all others when entering or leaving a room. The official place for the ambassador in the car is the backseat, curbside. His/her car is allowed to pass before all others. At ceremonies that take place on ships, the ambassador is the first to step on deck and the first to step off, and at airport ceremonies, he/she is the last to board and the first to disembark. When you attend social functions that the ambassador and other high-ranking U.S. officers are also attending, you should arrive approximately fifteen minutes early and make a special point to greet these officers. A personal greeting, however, is not necessary at a very large reception. Many of these courtesies are also extended to senior officers and visiting officials such as members of the Cabinet or Congress.

From time to time, the ambassador may ask employees to escort guests, substitute for him/her at meetings, or help at social functions. If you have been invited by the ambassador to a social event, it is important to know the role you will be expected to play. Chances are the invitation was issued for a business reason. Study the guest list in advance and arrive at least fifteen minutes early and offer your help. This usually includes greeting the guests and moving them away from the receiving line. Both the employee and his/her spouse should circulate and mingle, although not together. At these events, embassy staff will be busy ushering the guests and mingling; therefore, remember to eat before leaving home. Social functions are very important to the work of the mission. If your help is necessary, you may need to reschedule other commitments. It is perfectly acceptable to explain to a colleague that a senior officer needs your help. If you must depart before the event concludes, inform the ambassador's secretary before the event so that the ambassador can have a mental list of who is there and who is not to help him/her through the event.

Hierarchy

Diplomatic ranks can be confusing and unfamiliar. The following list ranks many of the positions (from the top down) one may find in a U.S. embassy. Not all positions exist in every embassy.

- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
- Ministers Plenipotentiary
- Ministers
- Chargé d'Affaires ad hoc or pro tempore
- Charge d' Affaires ad interim
- Minister-Counselors
- Counselors (or Senior Secretaries in the absence of Counselors)

Army, Naval and Air Attachés
Civilian Attaches not in the Foreign Service
First Secretaries
Second Secretaries
Assistant Army, Naval and Air Attachés
Civilian Assistant Attaches not in the Foreign Service
Third Secretaries and Assistant Attachés

When more than one ambassador is present in country, their order of precedence is determined by the order in which they presented their credentials to the country's chief of state. All ambassadors defer to the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, a position earned by virtue of longevity as his/her country's representative. When a country has more than one ambassador posted to multiple missions, the order of precedence among them is determined by the customs of their country.

III. HOST COUNTRY CULTURE

Outside the formal international diplomatic culture, another circle of customs and attitudes exists at the homes and private gatherings of host country citizens. Remember that as a guest, one is expected to respect the *host's* culture. Culture, of course, is unique to each country. Researching publications that describe in detail the particular customs of your new post before your departure will facilitate the transition process.

This booklet outlines several areas of common concern. The following "social red flags" signal situations of which one should be particularly aware.

Social Red Flags

- Invitations and responses

Cultural differences abound in issuing and responding to invitations. In most cases, the invitation will come addressed to all the family members invited. If a spouse is not specifically named, he/she is probably not invited. It is inappropriate to bring a date to a working event. However, in some places, one invitation addressed to the family is meant to include everyone in the house, even guests and visitors. Responding is very important and should be done, generally by phone, within two days of receiving the invitation. Be sure to observe the request on the invitation. "Regrets only" means to call only if you will not attend, and "RSVP" means to respond whether you will or will not attend.

- Greetings and forms of address

Although you should follow the guidelines about greeting, addressing and introducing someone in the formal international scene, you will need to learn about the local informal customs as well. Try to learn a few polite greetings in the native language that will get you through the more casual social situations. You will also need to be aware of different greeting rituals such as kisses, handshakes or bows. In some countries, for example, it is not uncommon to see men show affection. Tremendous differences exist in how close people stand to socialize, how loudly they speak, and how much eye contact they maintain. The best advice is to be observant and ask questions of the Foreign Service nationals and experienced officers at post. Show interest and concern in learning a different culture; most people will respond graciously.

- Local concept of social time

In some countries, an invitation for 8:00 p.m. means you should arrive at precisely 8:00 p.m. In some other countries, it means you should arrive no earlier than 9:30 p.m. To avoid awkward and embarrassing situations, ask questions before attending social events. The Foreign Service nationals who work in the mission are a valuable resource, as are experienced officers at post.

- Dress

Dress, too, varies according to country and event. Women should be particularly mindful of conservative dress rules, such as skirt length, low necklines, and having one's arms covered. Remember that "casual" in other countries almost never means jeans or shorts. It is always better to be too dressed up than too dressed down. (For more details, see Chapter V.)

- Conversation topics

Be aware that there are cultural differences about what constitutes casual conversation. In some places, it is perfectly acceptable for someone to ask your age or income. Knowing what is appropriate and what to expect helps one avoid problems. Acceptable casual conversation topics vary from culture to culture. Discussing children or food is rude in some cultures. Because one circulates at social events in order to meet as many people as possible, conversations should be fairly brief.

- Gifts

Even something as simple as bringing a gift to the host can be tricky. Many rituals and customs often surround the meaning of gifts. The type, color and number of flowers you bring, for example, may have a hidden meaning. In Italy, mums are funeral flowers; think twice about bringing them to a dinner party. A guest may be expected to bring a small gift, or it may be better to bring nothing at all. Once again, asking colleagues and co-workers about local customs will be most helpful.

- Eating and drinking

To be polite, accept the food and drink that is offered. If unsure or a bit apprehensive, try a small portion. If you do not wish to drink alcohol, still take some to have in your glass for toasts. If you do drink, however, as a U.S. representative, you should drink responsibly so as not to embarrass yourself or your country. If, for health or religious reasons, you absolutely cannot try even a small portion of a particular food or drink, it is acceptable to refuse with a short explanation. Consider new foods and drinks an opportunity to explore the new culture. Try them in good spirits and with an open mind.

- Gender issues

Gender roles vary from country to country, and sometimes even within regions of one country. For example, a husband may be expected to precede his wife in a receiving line, or men and women may go into separate rooms for dessert. Although men and women may drift away from each other and talk amongst themselves, the practice of actually separating men and women at any time during a dinner party is rare even in primarily gender-biased societies. Be aware that this may happen and when it does, it is best to go along with these traditions. Lacking a specific mission agenda, the diplomat's role is not to change host country customs. The country may not consider gender bias an issue that needs to be addressed.

- Status

When everyone is treated respectfully, only a few status issues merit special note. As mentioned earlier, stand when an ambassador and his/her spouse enter the room, and allow him/her to enter and exit a room first. When making introductions, introduce someone to the more distinguished or older person. In addition, reserve the far right-hand seat of a couch, as you sit, for the guest of honor.

- Thank you

Rituals often surround thanking someone. Without exception, thank your host before you leave. Tradition determines how you should thank the host the day after the event.

What, how and when to send gifts may be different depending on the customs of your post. In most cases, a hand-written note is sufficient, but to be seen as an appreciative guest, look into the customs of your new country.

Being a Guest

In addition to the social red flags, be aware of other guest responsibilities. These guidelines hold true whether you are attending a formal international event or a local party.

If you are a parent, you may be reluctant to leave your children behind when attending social functions. However, in most cases, children may not accompany their parents. Most social events for business or pleasure will not include children. If the event does include children, the invitation will make it very clear.

The tradition of toasting is practiced around the world. In most countries, a guest who is being toasted remains seated and does not drink to the toast. The honored guest makes a reply by standing and offering a toast to the host and hostess.

Leave a party at a reasonable hour, no matter how much fun you are having. Leaving early is better than overstaying one's welcome. But be aware that in some countries, a reasonable hour may be very late by U.S. standards. It is best not to leave prior to the departure of the senior official of any nationality. Do not leave before the guest of honor or the senior representative of your mission leaves, especially if you are helping to host a U.S. event. Be sure to thank the hosts before you depart, keeping the farewells brief.

You should thank your hosts in writing or by phone the next day unless the event was a very informal event or a very large reception. Thank you notes are hand-written and signed without courtesy titles (i.e., Mark Roberts, not Mr. Roberts). If you feel the situation merits a more elaborate thank you, let local custom be your guide for an appropriate response.

Resources

In most countries, an understood grace period for cultural blunders exists. That time should be sufficient for you to absorb the nuances of the culture, but if you need more concrete references, here are several suggestions:

- The ambassador's secretary can explain inviting and responding procedures.
- The Community Liaison Officer should have a good understanding of the local culture.
- The post protocol officer should be able to answer your questions.
- Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) or Host Country Nationals (HCNs) are excellent resources.
- The Transition Center's Overseas Briefing Center publishes cultural guides for many countries. Ask for one prior to departure. The OBC also maintains a cross-cultural bibliography of commercial resources.
- For extremely proper (but not country-specific) guidelines, *Protocol: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official and Social Usage, 25th Anniversary Edition* by Mary Jane McCaffree, Pauline Innis, and Richard M. Sand, is also helpful.

IV. ENTERTAINING

Entertaining widens one's circle of friends among officials and private citizens of the host country and other Foreign Service officers and diplomats. It also facilitates the informal exchange of information. Just as being a guest at a host country event affords the American diplomat an opportunity to experience the host country's culture, guests of embassy officers will expect to experience American culture. When planning the event, one must carefully consider whom to invite and how formal or informal the event will be. Also, be aware of the local customs on reciprocity.

The ambassador fulfills the obligation for formal entertaining for the mission; however, many staff members often have entertaining responsibilities as well. The type of entertaining depends on one's preferences, purpose, resources, and available facilities. For example, events can be hosted at one's home, a local restaurant, or club. Representational events need not be large, elaborate, or expensive. In many situations, a simple lunch or a backyard barbeque can be more effective (and enjoyable) than an elaborate dinner or reception.

For many posts, the most common place for official entertaining is in the home. When planning an event, consider the following:

- Consult the embassy calendar (kept by the Protocol Officer or the secretary to the Ambassador or Principal Officer) to ascertain that the proposed date is appropriate (i.e., not a holiday or the date of scheduled entertainment by others in the mission). Weekday evenings are the most common times for official staff entertaining. In fact, official entertaining rarely occurs outside the workweek. In many cultures, weekend days and evenings are reserved for family and social functions.
- If the event is to be a seated meal, consult the Protocol Officer for proper seating arrangements.
- Review plans in terms of local food and drink preferences, entertaining space, weather probabilities and the language abilities of proposed guests.
- If colleagues from the Mission are being invited to assist, they should be sent a guest list in advance of the event.
- It is helpful to make arrangements well in advance if equipment is to be borrowed or extra helpers hired. Include security and parking arrangements here, if appropriate.

Whom to Invite

Everyone in the diplomatic and consular community understands the need to make friends quickly. Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to invite new acquaintances, as well as individuals one wishes to meet, even before receiving an invitation from them. When members of the host government are invited, the event becomes an official function of the U.S. Mission and international protocol is in order. Well in advance of the invitations being sent, the protocol officer and/or senior officers at post should review the proposed guest list.

A common way to extend an invitation to a formal event and/or official function is through official stationary cards followed by a telephone call. Increasingly, however, the invitation is extended over the phone, and a card is sent as a reminder. Letterhead and calling cards are seldom used. Handwritten invitations on informals are a good way to extend invitations without the expense of having invitations printed. Some posts have blank stock, others do not. Check in advance to determine if this is an option at your post. As the RSVPs arrive, the protocol officer may be able to help design a proper seating arrangement.

The long-standing dilemma when entertaining abroad is the variation in responses to invitations. Invited guests may accept an invitation, but not attend. Others may not RSVP at all. Invited guests sometimes bring uninvited guests or arrive late. Differences in the country's cultural norms and perceptions of socially acceptable behavior account for these variations. When it is crucial to have an accurate guest list, one might telephone the invitees to ask if they will attend.

Differences in the concept of social time affect the role of the host as well as that of the guest. Find out whether the time on an invitation will be adhered to, or taken to mean two hours later. If guests arrive late according to custom, they will probably also leave late. The only way to learn these intricacies is by asking at post.

When making the guest list, do not assume that higher-ranking U.S. officers are off-limits. They often consider it a pleasant change of pace to attend less formal social functions. To accommodate them, check with the ambassador's or principal officer's secretary, and confirm the date to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Informal Entertaining

At most posts, informal entertaining is not only appropriate, but also the easiest and most representative of the way Americans entertain at home. Informal events encourage both the guests and the host(ess) to relax and circulate. Furthermore, if guests feel that they will not be competing with the gala event of the year, they are more likely to reciprocate.

Informal parties can take many forms, such as family-style meals, buffet lunches, and suppers, barbecues, picnics and tea parties. The key to any event is to move the guests around so they can talk to different people. Accomplish this by serving in several rooms, planning interactive games or music and dancing.

Buffet style is an excellent way to serve informal meals. The host(ess) or waiter may serve guests from the buffet, or guests may serve themselves. Tableware may be part of the buffet service or the table may be set in advance. Tables of six or eight people are more conducive to conversation than tables of four. If you choose not to set up tables, at least clear coffee tables and end tables so the guests can put down their dishes. A few tables for guests who are not comfortable eating from plates on their laps is a thoughtful touch.

If using place cards, follow the rules of precedence to determine who will be placed in the seat of honor (for a man, the seat to the right of the hostess and for a woman, the seat to the right of the host). If there is no prepared seating plan, ranking guests should be invited to sit at the host's table.

Unless there is a receiving line, the host(ess) and his/her spouse should stand near the entrance to greet guests as they arrive and also to say good-bye as they leave.

Formal Entertaining

Guests, Seating, and Service

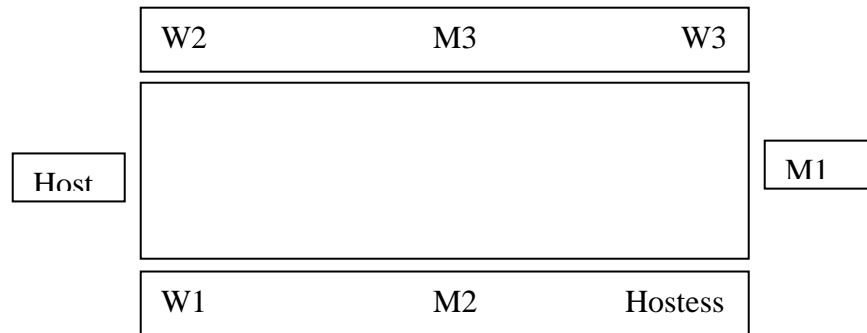
As the host(ess) of a formal event, one may call on U.S. Mission colleagues to serve as "co-hosts." Representational entertaining is a shared responsibility among officers at post. Formal entertaining includes a variety of representational events, meetings, and activities, as well as "black tie" and "white tie" dinners and receptions. A formal printed invitation should be issued well in advance, usually four to six weeks ahead. Invitations may also be extended by a phone call followed by a reminder card.

Prepare a guest list that shows the title or profession of each guest and make that list available in advance to the mission staff members who will be co-hosting with you. Occasionally, other guests or Ministry officials may request the list; it may be appropriate to provide it to them. It is appropriate to provide the list to the guest(s) of honor.

One may wish to consult the post's protocol officer for advice in creating a guest list and seating arrangement. The number of guests, their names and positions, the purpose of the party, and the shape and number of tables are but a few of the details that need to be addressed. Guidelines for seating and service follow, but keep in mind that they may be adapted to each event.

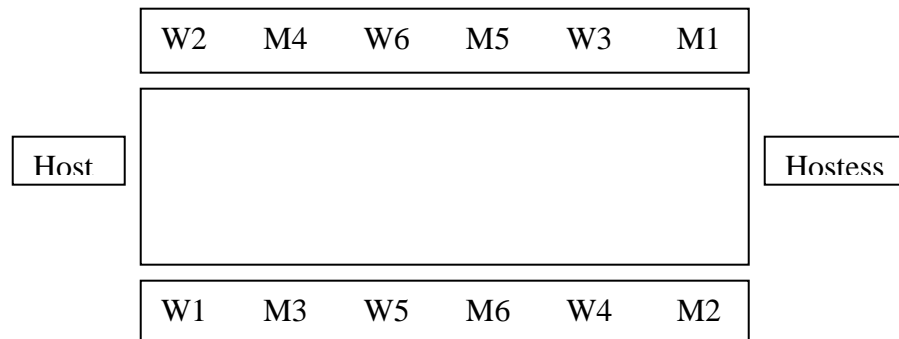
Both the guest of honor and other guests must know who has the place of honor. In the United States, the place of honor for a man is at the right of the hostess; for a woman, it is at the right of the host. However, in some countries, the place of honor is at the left of the host/hostess. The host and hostess can sit at opposite ends or across from one another at the same table. They may also be seated at separate tables. If so, each chooses a co-host or co-hostess, creating two more seats of honor. Co-hosts and co-hostesses are usually ranking guests or colleagues from the U.S. Mission. After the guest of honor and the host(ess) or co-host(ess) are seated, the arrangement goes by rank, gender, and nationality. As a general rule, couples sit across the table from each other, not side-by-side. Several examples of possible seating arrangements are illustrated below. To seat 8, 12, 16, or 20 people without two men or two women sitting together, the hostess sits to the left of the seat that is properly hers. ("W" represents a female guest; "M" represents a male guest.) This allows the M seat of honor to still be at the hostess's right. However, unless you divide the "honored couple," invariably one couple will be seated side by side.

Sample Seating Arrangement for Eight



Sample Seating Arrangement for Fourteen

The most common arrangement places the host and hostess at the head and foot of the table. ("W" represents a female guest; "M" represents a male guest.)



Sample Seating Arrangement for a Men's/Women's Luncheon or Dinner

For same-sex events with only a host or hostess, a better balance of rank may be achieved by designating a co-host and having the host and co-host seated opposite of each other at the center of the table.



As a general rule, an even number of men and women alternate seats at a table. In American homes, foreign guests take precedence over Americans of comparable rank with the exception of the Ambassador of the United States. The Ambassador is seated as a host or hostess to avoid seating precedence conflicts. This courtesy also applies to the ambassador's spouse. If an unequal number of men and women (or individuals of more than one nationality) are in attendance, alternate both the sexes as well as the nationalities. One possibility is to seat the host(ess) and the guest of honor opposite each other in the middle of the long sides of the dining table and then alternate from there. The husband of a high-ranking female official is seated commensurately; do not demote him. When many high-ranking officials are expected to attend the event, if possible, seat them in a manner such that many hold a seat of honor. An excellent way of doing this is to use round tables. Using round tables is also helpful in minimizing disruptions if place settings must be removed at the last minute.

Place a seating chart in the entrance hall so that each guest may find his/her place before entering the dining room. Although rarely practiced today, men might be given a "take-in card" which designates a particular woman to escort to the table. Place cards are used when there are more than eight guests. Place them above the plates with the names and titles visible to the guests seated at either side. For the benefit of the guests across the table, consider printing the names on the back of the cards as well. When there are many tables, a table chart is often used to assist guests in locating their table.

One waiter for every six to eight guests is generally sufficient. Guests may be served in sequence around the table or women may be served before men. If guests are served in sequence, the woman on the host's right is served first. The man to her right is served next, and service proceeds counter clockwise so that the host is served last. If women are served first, the woman on the host's right is served at the same time as the woman to his left. Two servers then proceed clockwise around the table to the women and then to the men. If there is only one server per table, the direction of service should be reversed after each course so that the same guests are not always served last. Local customs for serving should be observed.

As mentioned above, seek advice at post about the local customs on toasts and drinking in general. Usually, toasts are made with the dessert course. At the end of the meal, the host or hostess makes the first move to leave the table. Guests then follow in order of precedence. Coffee may be served in another room.

For suggestions on menus, table settings and decorations, consult an etiquette book or a cookbook designed for entertaining.

Receiving Lines

At formal receptions, a receiving line enables the host and hostess to greet each guest personally. Usually, the host stands first and the hostess stands second. However, the hostess may defer to guests of honor and stand after them in line. To stand in line and receive guests with a drink or cigarette in your hand is considered discourteous.

An official staff member may introduce each guest; guests may also introduce themselves. All U.S. staff members should help the host(ess) attend to the guests by "taking them off the line"; greeting them as they finish the receiving line, accompanying them to the refreshments, and integrating them into conversations.

At the end of the event, the host should be available near the exit to say good-bye to guests. At an event hosted by the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, Public Affairs Officer, or agency head, staff members should stay until all foreign guests have departed.

Toasts

A verbal greeting, a toast is also given in tribute to someone. Hosts of diplomatic dinners often offer two toasts, one being a welcome toast to everyone in the room. This toast is usually offered after the first course is served to all guests. Another toast to the guest of honor is offered at the beginning or at the end of the dessert course. It is helpful to practice your toast beforehand and to be brief.

When giving a toast, rise in place and speak to the entire room. Raise your glass to eye level and look toward the honored person and drink, making eye contact with the honored person. You should then nod and put your glass on the table and sit down. The person being toasted should never drink to himself/herself. A nod or smile of appreciation can suffice for a response, or the honored person can return the toast by rising afterwards and offering a formal response.

V. DRESS

Through tradition and usage, diplomats have come to wear certain kinds of clothes for certain occasions. Your "uniform" will depend on the function, be it casual or formal. This section gives a description of each kind of dress and the occasions for which they are appropriate. Keep in mind that local customs impose many modifications, so be sure to check at post. Sometimes, wearing the country's ethnic or national dress in lieu of traditional dress is appropriate.

In various parts of the world, a specific nomenclature for dress has arisen. Contrary to the common meaning within U.S. culture, in the diplomatic community, "informal dress" equates to business dress (see below). In some parts of the world, other terms for informal dress for men include "lounge suit", "national dress," "tenue de ville," "planters," "shirt and tie," "island casual," and "bush shirt." "Planters" refers to a long sleeved white shirt with a tie and dark trousers. "Bush shirt" is a long or short-sleeved shirt with a finished bottom edge worn outside rather than tucked into the slacks, or a long or short sleeved embroidered man's shirt. "Island casual" means a Hawaiian shirt and casual (usually khaki) slacks.

Similarly, various terms apply to formal dress for men. "Tuxedo" and "smoking jacket" mean black tie, whereas a "Red Sea Rig" or "Gulf Rig" means a tuxedo minus the jacket. "Dinner jacket" may refer to either a dark-colored or white jacket. If you are unsure of the terminology used, it is always appropriate to clarify before the event.

For many posts, the overwhelming choice for day-to-day business is a suit and tie for men and a business suit or conservative dress for women. Men and women of all ranks of staff and spouses are expected to bring this type of clothing. Many posts stress that daily attire closely resembles that seen in Washington, DC. Although suitable dress clothing for men can often be purchased at post, it is often limited and expensive. The selection for women may be larger, but the clothing is often limited and expensive as well. Business attire for women is usually appropriate for official evening functions.

Occasionally, business attire will not be appropriate. Below are some dressing guidelines to help clarify the lines between formal and casual wear, day and evening wear. As always, exceptions to the rule exist, so be observant and inquire at post.

Formal "Black Tie" or "White Tie"

Formal wear may be worn at evening performances of the opera, the theater, balls, and for the most formal of dinners and evening affairs. Black tie is generally not worn in the daytime. White tie requires the additional formality of a cutaway ("tails") and white tie for men and a floor-length ball gown for women. Above all, let the information on the invitation be your guide. If the invitation is unclear, ask when you respond to the invitation.

Male Attire

- Black, hip-length coat without tails and with silk or satin lapels (a white dinner coat may be worn in hot weather and the tropics)
- Low-cut black waistcoat or cummerbund may be worn with a single-breasted coat.
- Black trousers
- White starched or pleated shirt or a soft evening shirt with studs instead of buttons
- Wing, turn-down, or attached collar and black bow tie
- Black shoes and socks
- Hats and gloves are optional but not worn or carried indoors

Female Attire

- Knee-length cocktail dress
- Floor-length ball gown
- Long skirt with top
- High-heeled shoes or dressy flats
- Above-elbow gloves are optional with a sleeveless evening gown, and short gloves may be worn with a long-sleeved gown. If worn, gloves need not be removed for a receiving line or dancing, but are removed prior to eating or drinking.

Semi-formal/Informal

Semi-formal/informal wear may be worn for cocktail parties, dinners, some dances, the theater, the opera, and evening receptions.

Male Attire

- Dark suit
- Tie or bow tie
- Dark shoes and socks

Female Attire

- Short cocktail dress
- Gloves are optional

- High-heeled shoes or dressy flats

Casual

Unlike the United States, most countries do not define casual as jeans and sneakers or sportswear. Shorts and jeans, for men and women, are considered inappropriate attire for social functions in many parts of the world. Instead, you will find that business attire is usually appropriate for an event specified as casual. Breakfast, lunch, daytime meetings, afternoon tea, and some receptions are generally considered casual, but the invitation should specify.

Male Attire

- Business suit (light or dark) or
- Sports jacket and pants
- Tie or bow tie
- Dress shoes or loafers

Female Attire

- Business suit or daytime dress
- Pumps or flats
- Head coverings may be considered a requirement at some events. Wide-brim hats may also provide welcome and necessary protection from the sun; check with the post.

Medals and Decorations

Foreign Service officers are prohibited from accepting decorations from foreign governments. If you wish to wear war service decorations or civilian medals at formal day or evening events, check with the protocol officer. If appropriate, wear them on your left lapel or over the left breast pocket, U.S. military medals above U.S. civilian medals.

SUMMARY

Every U.S. Government employee should acquaint him/herself with the general rules of social conduct as well as those rules particular to a post or country of assignment. An understanding and acceptance of these rules will enhance relationships, whether formal, informal, official or unofficial, with people of other nations.

To accomplish this, many resources are available to U.S. representatives, not the least of which are observation and interaction. The prudent employee, and family members, will supplement his/her knowledge by reading prior to arriving at post, participating in the post orientation program, and consulting with host country experts. The better prepared a representative and family members are, the more effective and pleasurable their overseas experience will be.

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Other Web link Resources:

Australia Protocol Guidelines: http://www.dfat.gov.au/protocol/Protocol_Guidelines

Everyday Flag Etiquette: <http://www.jord1.com/flagshop/etiquette.html>

Hong Kong Flag & Emblems: <http://www.info.gov.hk/protocol/eng/index.htm>

Protocol Professionals: <http://www.protocolprofessionals.com/articles.htm>

Glossary of Diplomatic Terms

agrément—the host government's acceptance of the nomination of an ambassador to the country

ambassador-designate—a diplomatic agent who has been designated by the President as his/her choice as personal representative but who has not yet been confirmed by the Senate and who has not taken the oath of office

ambassador—an official envoy or diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government as the official resident representative of his own government; or an official appointed for a special, often temporary, diplomatic assignment

Ambassador—capitalized when referring to a specific person (i.e., Ambassador Scott)

ambassador at large—an ambassador whose portfolio addresses specific issues rather than one specific country

ambassador extraordinaire and plenipotentiary—a diplomatic agent who is the personal representative of the head of one state accredited to the head of another state

attaché—a civilian or military technical expert or specialist on the mission

chancery—the embassy office building

chargé d'affaires—a diplomatic agent accredited by letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs or Secretary of State of one country by his/her counterpart in lieu of a duly accredited ambassador

chargé d'affaires ad interim—also referred to as charge; a subordinate diplomat who substitutes for an ambassador or minister in his/her absence

chief of mission—principal officer of an overseas mission, with the title of Ambassador, Minister, or Charge d' Affaires

consul—a consular officer of high rank, often at the First Secretary level, within an embassy

consul-general—a consular officer of the highest rank; senior official at the consulate general

consular agent—individual who performs limited consular functions in cities where there is no mission

consulate—a constituent or subordinate post; also the office of the consul and his/her staff

consulate general—a large constituent or subordinate post

counselor—a diplomatic title accorded to a head of a section in the embassy, such as "Counselor for Political Affairs" or "Political Counselor"

demarche—a request or intercession with a foreign official, e.g., a request for support of a policy, or a protest about the host government's policy or actions

deputy chief of mission (DCM)—the second in command at an embassy who becomes the charge d'affaires in the ambassador's absence

diplomatic agent—a generic term denoting a person who carries out regular diplomatic relations of the nation he/she represents in the nation to which he/she has been accredited

diplomatic note—a formal written means of communication among embassies

diplomatic corps—the collective heads of foreign diplomatic missions and their staff members

diplomatic immunity—exemption of foreign diplomatic agents or representatives from local jurisdiction

diplomatic ranks

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Ministers Plenipotentiary

Ministers

Chargé d'Affaires ad hoc or pro tempore

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Minister-Counselors

Counselors (or Senior Secretaries in the absence of Counselors) Army, Naval and Air

Attaches

Civilian Attachés

First Secretaries

Second Secretaries

Assistant Army, Naval and Air Attachés

Civilian Assistant Attachés

Third Secretaries and Assistant Attachés

dual accreditation—having two or more responsibilities, such as an ambassador who is simultaneously accredited to two nations

embassy—a diplomatic mission in the capital city of a foreign country headed by an ambassador

exequatur—written, official recognition of a consular officer issued by the government to which one is accredited

interest section—the office responsible for protecting the interests of the United States, housed in a third country embassy, in a country with which the United States has no formal diplomatic relations

legation—a diplomatic mission in a foreign country headed by a minister. The United States has none at present, but a few other countries do

mission—a generic term for embassy. Mission also describes the entirety of official U.S. representation in a given foreign country which functions under the supervision of the Ambassador, including civilian and military personnel (except U.S. military reporting to a unified command and official U.S. representation to a multilateral organization).

passport—the official document issued to a person by his/her government certifying citizenship and requesting foreign governments to grant the individual safe passage, lawful aid and protection while under that government's jurisdiction

p.c.—used in written social correspondence, "pour condoler" (to express sympathy)

p.f.—used in written social correspondence, "pour feliciter" (to extend congratulations)

p.m.—used in written social correspondence, "pour memo ire" (to remind)

p.p.—used in written social correspondence, "pour presenter" (to introduce)

p.p.c.—used in written social correspondence, "pour prendre conge" (to say goodbye)

p.r.—used in written social correspondence, "pour remercier" (to express thanks)

persona non grata—an individual who is unacceptable to or unwelcome by the host government

precedence—priority; the right to superior honor on a ceremonial or formal occasion; for ambassadors in a country, precedence is determined by the order in which they presented their credentials to the host government

residence—the home/living quarters of the ambassador

secretary (third, second, first)—diplomatic rank of officers posted overseas, in ascending order of seniority

vice consul—a junior ranking consular officer

visa—a seal or endorsement made on a passport by the proper officials of a country which entitles the bearer to apply for entry into another country at the port of admission