



December 1, 2008

First office holiday party do's and don'ts

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If your office is still having a holiday party this year, it's the season to discuss proper etiquette at these affairs. Not only can such events be extremely enjoyable, but also they can help boost your career . if handled appropriately.
Do:

1. Attend. This is how you get to know people and how people get to know you. People pay attention to who goes to these parties, so unless you have a real emergency, make every effort to be there,+said Nina M. Long, director of human resources at Poyner Spruill LLP.

2. Thank the person who's hosting the party. The higher in the company, the better. Few people do this, and it displays class and poise on your part,+said Sharon Reus of the Positive Image Communications Co.

3. Dress appropriately. While this is a party, it is not the time to let your wild side show,+said Dr. Thea Lobell, a leadership speaker and consultant. Ask others how people dress for this office party. I've been to office parties where people viewed it as a time to dress down and wear jeans. Last year, I went to one where people dressed in black tie and cocktail dresses. The only way to know is to ask. You want to show you are a part of the culture and able to fit in.+

4. Discuss more than work. Even though a holiday party is a business function, conversations should not be limited to work issues. View the event as an opportunity to connect on a more personal level. If business issues do arise, make sure to speak in a positive and upbeat manner,+said **Mary Crane**, a workplace consultant and an expert on holiday party etiquette.

5. Make positive eye contact. Looking at someone's eyes transmits energy and indicates interest and openness,+said Dr. Carol Kinsey Goman, an executive coach, author and keynote speaker. To improve your eye contact, make a practice of noticing the eye color of everyone with whom you speak at the party.+

Don't:

1. Complain in public. "Never ever complain in public, especially at a holiday party. Many people will be doing this, but you don't have that luxury. Use this time to show people how professional and positive you are because that's the person who's going to advance,+said Noah St. John, author of *The Secret Code of Success*."+

2. Drink too much. It's fine to have a drink or two, but people will have cameras and remember on Monday. You don't want to be that girl or guy,+said Kelly Quintanilla, marketing director of the CUSO Development Company.

3. Bring a blind date, someone you don't know well or someone who needs babysitting. This is your time to create meaningful connections with people in the office. It is not time for your personal life,+said Lobell. Also, your date reflects on you. It is imperative that if you choose to bring a guest, he or she reflects well on you.+

4. Be shy. Sure, it can be intimidating and a little bit scary to talk to people you might not know very well yet, but just remember, most people are at the party for the same reason . to socialize and have fun,+said Bruce Powell, managing partner at IQ PARTNERS Inc. Don't wait for people to come to you. Introduce yourself to those you might not know yet, or just walk up and say hi to those that you do know. Not only does this get you involved, but also it shows you to be a confident, outgoing person . both desirable traits.+

5. Head straight to the buffet and bar. You were not invited because you were hungry or thirsty,+said Carol Bory, principal of Carol Bory Etiquette Consulting. Eat something before arriving at the party. At the buffet, stay away from greasy or sauce-laden foods. Choose finger foods that can be held in your left hand and consumed in a few bites. You can always eat more after the party.+