

What to Wear

Guide for Proper Dress of Spouses/Civilian Guests at Military Social Functions

Official Types of Dress	Civilian Attire	Military Uniform	Ladies
Formal	Black Tie: Dinner jacket/tuxedo White Tie: Tails	Dress Blues or Whites, Mess Dress, and bow tie, Dinner Dress Blues or Whites	Black Tie: Long or short evening gown or Suit (elegant separates) White Tie: Evening formal
Informal	Coat and Tie	Dress Blues with Four-in-Hand tie, Service Dress	Dressy Dress, Cocktail dress, or Suit
Casual	Slacks and open collar shirt – no jeans, no tie		Dress, skirt, slacks, often flat shoes – no jeans
Unofficial Types of Dress			
Semi-formal	Follow Informal (see above)		Follow Informal (see above)
Very Casual	Picnic Type Clothes – usually includes jeans and shorts		Picnic Type Clothes – usually includes jeans and shorts
Local Dress: For example: Texas, Hawaiian, California, or American Casual.	Be sure to ask your host!		Be sure to ask your host!

Event	Dress
Coffees	Casual
Hail and Farewells	Informal or casual
Teas	Informal
Dining Out	Formal
Formal/Ball	Formal or Informal*
Luncheons	Casual
Promotion Party	Casual
Receptions	Informal
New Year's Day Reception	Formal or Informal*

- When in doubt what the proper dress is for these functions, be sure to look at the tie designation for Service members: Bow Tie (Formal) or Four-in-hand (Informal).
- Remember, the table to the left is just a guide. The host/hostess may choose a different dress code based on the theme, location, and entertaining comfort level!
- If the invitation is not clear, the host/hostess can clear up any misunderstandings. It is OK to ask when you R.s.v.p.!
- You cannot go wrong erring on the side of caution! If you cannot get clarification from the invitation or host/hostess, consider being more conservative in your outfit selection.

Invitations

The following items should always be included on invitations:

- Type of Event
- Date of Event
- Time of Event
- Host and/or Hostess
- Location
- R.s.v.p. Information
- Attire

My family and I would like you to share our happiness
on the occasion of my promotion to

Major
United States Air Force

Saturday, June 26, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Backyard BBQ
1234 Main Street, Heartland

John & Jane Smith Very
R.s.v.p. 555-465-7890

Casual attire

The family and friends of
Randall Jones

cordially invite you to join us

in thanking him for 20 years of serving our country
and wishing him well in his next endeavor

Saturday, the 12th of August

Like Side Country Club

Dinner at 7pm

Special Tribute at 9pm

Regrets Only
jonesfamily@internet.com

Casual

Now that the kids are back in school
Please join the
HHBN Coffee Group
In an afternoon of chat and chew at our
Back to School Coffee
Wednesday, September 8, 2014
Mike's Bakery, 1234 Main Street

11:00 am – 1:00 pm R.s.v.p. to
Jane Wright 315-555-6789
By 1 September

Prizes awarded for
wearing the most
School spirit!

The Spouses of Operations Group
request the pleasure of your company at a

Farewell Tea in honor of
Mrs. Jonathon Smith

on Saturday, the twenty-seventh of August
at three o'clock

Tea Room at Fancy Hotel
Neighboring Town, California

R.s.v.p. by 12 August
Susan Jones 555-1234

Sunday Best

Dr. Silas D. Doc has met his untimely death!
Come to this month's SCFD luncheon and find out Who Dunit!
Thursday, 16 October
11 – 1 PM, The Commons
Every guest is a suspect in this Murder Mystery Party!

Buffet Lunch \$15.00
R.s.v.p. by 9 October, reservations@scfd.com

Casual

Organization or personal Graphic
Major General and Mrs. Thomas Smith
request the pleasure of your company at dinner
to celebrate the Two Hundredth Thirty-ninth Anniversary
United States Army
on Saturday, the fourteenth of June
two thousand and fourteen
at seven o'clock
at the
Army Community Club
Fort Somewhere, New York

R.s.v.p.
Protocol Office
315-555-9876
somewhereprotocol@usarmy.mil

Dress Mess
Black Tie

Organization graphic
Colonel and Mrs. Regimental Commander Jr.
Request the pleasure of your company at their
New Year Reception
On Saturday, the seventh of January
From two until two forty-five
24 Commander's Loop
Camp Service, City
R.s.v.p. by January 4th to 555-7206
Or regemental.commander@usmilitary.mil
Dress: Military - Military Service Uniform with four-in-hand-tie
Civilian - Informal

R.s.v.p.

When you are asked to R.s.v.p. to an event, it is common courtesy to do so in the manner requested on the invitation and to do so quickly! The following guidelines will help you follow this very important protocol when receiving an invitation.

- No matter how it is written – R. s. v. p. ; Please Respond; The Favor of a Reply is Requested – respond to an invitation within 24 to 48 hours. The only exception to this is if the hostess has written, “Please respond no later than 15 June” or “Please reply by the 10th of August. ” In this case, you may wait until the deadline given.
- The means of response that is indicated on the invitation should be used. For example, if a phone number is given, you should call; if an e-mail address is given, you should e-mail your response. If both are given, you may choose the method to respond. Always tell the hostess whether you are or are not attending. Do not just say, “I’m R.s.v.p.ing. ” You do not have to give the host or hostess a reason if you are not attending. You may just say, “Thank you for your kind invitation, I will not be able to attend.”
- If responding by phone, you may leave your response on voicemail. It is a good idea to leave information about the event you are responding to so that the hostess will understand your message. For example, you should say, “This is Jane Doe. I am calling to let you know that John and I will be happy to attend Thanksgiving dinner on the 25th of November at 5:00. Thank you for the invitation.”
- Do not ask to bring additional guests if their names are not on the invitation. Likewise, do not take, or ask if you may take, your children unless their names are on the invitation.
- If you respond “yes” and something comes up and you cannot attend a function, call the hostess as soon as possible with a “no” and an apology for having to rescind your acceptance. However, if you answer “no” and later find that, you can attend; you should not call and ask the hostess if you may change your “no” to a “yes.” Unfortunately, if the initial R.s.v.p. was “no” you will have to miss the event.

Thank You Notes and Other Gestures of Appreciation

A thank you can be a mailed note, phone call, or a thank you at the door, depending on the occasion. Email is also appropriate if you know the host/hostess and use their email regularly. Regardless of how you do it, a personal thank you is always appreciated. It is generally not necessary to write a thank you note for large official functions, such as a reception to which hundreds of guests have been invited.

- A small hostess gift is always appreciated when visiting someone's home. This does not have to be expensive. Homemade cookies or muffins, jellies, a bottle of wine, or flowers are appropriate. It sends the message that you appreciate the invitation.
- Promptness is important, but it is never too late to thank anyone. Try to get in the habit of writing a thank you before you go to bed the same night.
- Address thank you notes to the host/hostess only. Sign it from yourself. If you are writing as a couple, refer to the other person in the note. Example: "John and I had such a great time," or "Bob joins me in thanking you."
- Specifically mention something special about the event.

The following is a simple thank you note format:

Dear (Host/Hostess name),

(Your spouse/partner's name) and I (use verb, e.g., appreciated, liked, enjoyed) type of event/what is was. Express something specific about the event (e.g., hospitality, meal, company, conversation), and mention host/hostess.

End note with second thank you and express one last compliment or desire to see them in the future/meet again.

Closing,

Your Signature

What to Know About Receiving Lines

- Honored guest(s) or guest speaker, honored guest or guest speaker's spouse, host, and hostess are typically the official party. (See diagram below)
- Arrive on time; units, staff elements, and organizations sometimes go through the line together. The official party typically receives guests for 30 minutes from the time given on the invitation.
- First person in the receiving line is the Aide/Adjutant – do not shake his or her hand. The Service member introduces guest to Aide and gives his or her official title. The Aide presents the guest to the host who, in turn, presents him or her to the guest of honor.
- Receiving lines are for introductions; it is not appropriate to initiate conversations. So if you are asked, "How do you do?" an appropriate response is, "Well, thank you. Nice to meet you." Then move on.
- Wear nametags on right.
- The lady precedes the gentleman in Army, Navy, Marine, and "other-than-official" receiving lines; sponsors precede spouses in the Air Force receiving lines; and men precede women in receiving lines at the White House or for the diplomatic corps.
- The carpet is only for the official party to stand on. Carpet runners are not mandatory and may be excluded for reasons of safety.

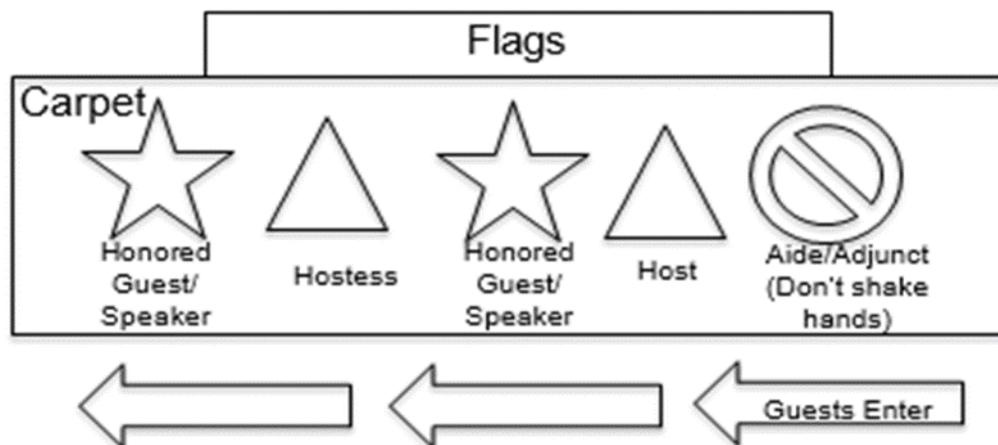
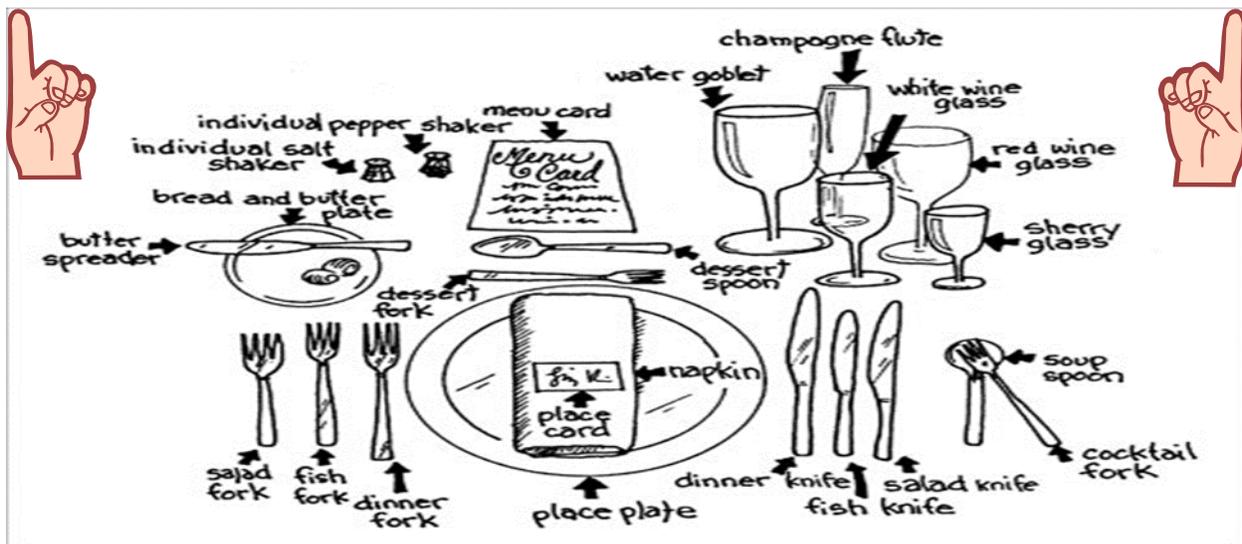


Table Settings

- Utensils should be used starting with the outermost ones and working toward the dinner plate.
- Remember D is for Drinks! Drinks, such as water, wine, tea, and coffee, are to the right of the dinner plate.
- Remember B is for Bread. Bread along with other food items, such as salad and dessert are to the left of the dinner plate.

Below is an example of one formal place setting:



There are three types of place settings: basic, informal, and formal. These typically include the following:

Basic

- Napkin, Dinner Fork, Water Glass, Soup Spoon, Dinner Knife, Dinner Plate

Informal – All of the Basic plus:

- Salad Plate, Butter Knife, Bread and Butter Plate, Soup Bowl and Plate, Salad Fork

Formal – All of Informal and Basic plus:

- Dessert Spoon, Dessert Fork, Wine Glass, Cup and Saucer, Fish Knife, Fish Fork

Social Functions

Coffees

- Unofficial social group in unit.
- Usually formed at O5 level or higher commands.
- Usually held monthly.
- Opportunity to welcome new spouses/partners, farewell to leaving spouses/partners, meet others in unit, find out what is happening in unit and on post.
- Refreshments are served.
- Hosting a coffee is voluntary, but hosting is usually shared by all members of group.
- Invitation list varies from group to group; however, the list usually consists of officers' spouses/partners and the senior non-commissioned officer's spouse/partner.

Hail and Farewells

- Unit parties intended to welcome and farewell the incoming and departing designated Service members.
- Opportunity to meet and mingle with the Service members and family members in the unit.
- Unit members share cost and planning.
- These events can be held in a number of venues, such as restaurants, picnics, and barbeques.

Teas

- Usually held in the afternoon and usually in honor of departing or incoming commander's or senior non-commissioned officer's spouse.
- Most formal daytime function. Therefore, a dress or suit and heels are the most appropriate attire for this event. Do not wear slacks or pants suits.
- Coffee, tea, punch, and/or finger sandwiches are often served.
- Being asked to pour is an honor, and sticking to the pouring schedule is essential as it is timed very precisely.
- Usually includes a receiving line.
- Unless a person is pregnant, elderly, or ill, sitting down does not occur at a tea.

Dining-In

- Old military tradition passed down from the British.
- Opportunity to celebrate unit successes and enjoy the tradition and heritage of the unit and military.
- Most formal of events for officers and non-commissioned officers only.
- Spouses/partners are not invited.

Formal/Dining-In

- Most formal of events that includes spouses/partners and dates.
- May include a receiving line.
- Will include posting/retiring the colors, guest speakers and honored guests, toasts, and a formal program.

Luncheons

- Most spouses' organizations have a luncheon schedule or similar activity held monthly.
- There may be a social hour before and a program after the luncheon.
- Reservations are almost always required.
- Membership in the organization is often required to attend; however, often many clubs offer an eligible member the opportunity to attend once before joining.
- There is usually a cost associated to attend these events.

Promotion Party

- Given by an officer, non-commissioned officer, or group of people with similar dates of rank, shortly after a Service member is promoted.
- Opportunity to share with invited friends and their spouses/partners in the good fortune a promotion provides.
- In the Navy, a promotion party is called a Wetting Down.

Receptions

- Usually held in honor of a special guest or guests or after a change of command.
- There may or may not be a receiving line.
- Before departing, guests should thank host or hostess and say good-bye to the guest of honor.

New Year's Day Reception

- One of the oldest traditions observed in the Military.
- Hosted by the unit commander, these are most frequently seen at the O5 level commands and higher.
- This event is considered to be a "Command Performance" event; therefore, all of the military members who are invited are expected to attend.
- The reception is held either in the commander's home, local community club, or other appropriate reception facility.
- Usually attendees arrive in a "shift format" as a group.
- One group may attend for 45 minutes followed by a 15- to 30-minute break, so the food and drink may be replenished before the next shift/group arrives.
- Arrival and departure times are indicated on each invitation and should be strictly followed.

Dining-In and Dining-Out History and Other Customs

History

It is believed that the practice of a dining-in began many years ago in England. The origin was probably not a military function but a custom practiced in monasteries and early universities. With the advent of the officers' mess, the British military establishment adopted the custom. The close association and camaraderie between British and American military forces during World Wars I and II led to the United States Military's adoption of the dining-in as an integral part of the regimental mess. Some dining-ins are now exercises in conservatism. In other words how to have fun and not overindulge. An addition to the tradition is the dining-out.

Other Customs

- Posting/retiring the colors: Posting the colors during a dining-in or dining-out signifies the start of the formal program of the event. The colors or flags carried on foot, usually consists of the United States Flag, Flag of the United States Military Service, General Officer Flags (if in attendance), and Organizational Colors. Retiring the colors signifies the end of the formal program. Attendees should silently stand facing the flag with their hands by their sides until the colors are posted or retired properly.

- The Grog Bowl: One of the most traditional parts of a dining-in/out has been the Grog Bowl. The history of the Grog Bowl has become obscured with time. It is thought that during the years of the westward expansion, Cavalry Troopers would share their spirits with one another thereby ensuring that all fellow troopers had something. The spirits usually consisted of whatever was an individual trooper's taste, and that, when mixed with other drinks, created a powerful drink known as *grog*. The comradeship developed over the decades and through the various wars and campaigns usually entailed the rare opportunity to share spirits with each other. Today's *grog* is more symbolic. It encompasses the age-old custom of sharing with the history of a unit.
 - (The Grog Bowl, while a tradition of the dining-In and dining-Out, is not one always found at a Formal or Ball and may or may not be alcoholic.)

- Prison of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Presentation: This tradition is represented at a table set for one or four (Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force) with or without hats. Each item on the table symbolizes a separate note of remembrance. The event's narrator reads a script highlighting the following symbols:
 - **Small Table** for the fragility of one prisoner alone against his or her oppressors.

- **White Tablecloth** for the purity of the POW/MIA Service member's intentions to respond to his or her country's call to arms.
- **Single Yellow Rose** is a reminder of the families and loved ones of our comrades-in-arms who keep faith awaiting return.
- **Red Ribbon** tied to the vase that contains the yellow rose is similar to the red ribbon worn by the people who bear witness to their unyielding determination to demand proper accounting of our missing.
- A **slice of lemon** to remind us of the POW/MIA Service member's bitter fate.
- **Salt** on the bread plate symbolic of the families' tears as they wait.
- An **inverted glass** since the POW/MIA Service member cannot toast with the attendees that night.
- **Empty chair(s)** because the POW/MIA Service member(s) is/are not at the event.

Etiquette at Social Events

Making Introductions

- Introduce:
 - Younger to older
 - Men to women
 - Junior to senior
- Say the *honored* person's name first
 - "Mr. Wilson, this is Dennis."
 - "Mrs. Smith, I would like for you to meet Bob Myers."
 - "Colonel Green, may I present Sergeant Gray."

Nametags

- If it is provided, wear it on the right side when possible. Placement of the tag on the right facilitates reading the tag when shaking hand.

Relationships with Senior People

- Please approach and introduce yourself to the senior people (Service member and spouse/partner) in attendance at functions.
- Do not call senior people by their first names unless invited to do so.
- If the invitation to be on a first name basis is offered by a senior Service member and/or spouse/partner – they mean it! It is appropriate to accept the invitation.
- Even if a more junior individual is on first name basis with senior people, that individual should refer to the senior person by rank or title during public introductions or in other official forums.

Social Talk and Table Manners

- Do not discuss medical problems with MEDDAC personnel, legal problems with JAG personnel, or problems with your quarters with housing office employees. They want time off too! These conversations are better suited during office hours.
- Do not discuss controversial or sensitive subjects. Do not gossip. Refrain from giving out too much personal information about you or your spouse/partner.
- When you arrive at your table at a seated dinner, like a Dining Out, do not immediately sit down. Look to the head table for cues.
- Before seating himself, a man should assist any woman to his right to her seat.
- Do not talk or leave your seat during the guest speaker's speech.
- If seated at a round table, make it a point to make the acquaintance of the people you do not know and greet those you do know. If seated at a long table, it is not necessary to get acquainted with everyone, just introduce yourself to the people/couples on your left and right and across the table.

Other Reminders

- Do not forget a hostess gift for event's at people's homes.