



To go or not to go?

The company holiday party is coming up. Do you attend, even if you don't feel like it? Yes!

Unless there is an illness or prior commitment that can't be broken, your attendance is considered obligatory, not optional. Companies often host holiday parties – whether they're lavish galas or casual gatherings – for many reasons: to thank their employees, celebrate the season, emphasize teamwork, and boost morale, among other reasons. By showing up, you display your respect and appreciation.

A company event can be a test to your manners and social skills, so here is a list of things to know for when you've received an invite.

RSVP. Reply to the invitation as soon as possible. If your plans change, notify the appropriate person – organization and budgets may be affected.

What to wear. Check the invitation, ask, or follow your supervisor's lead. Is the event black tie/formal, semi-formal, business-casual, cocktail, dressy casual, or casual? Perhaps a traditional suit, tasteful dress, or casual with a reasonably festive blouse or red tie. Avoid plunging necklines, excessive jewelry, and strong cologne/perfume. Be professional and show that you have taste.

Be our guest. If the invitation doesn't say "and Guest," spouse/significant other, or kids, don't assume they're

invited. There might be a legitimate reason why they weren't mentioned on the invite.

You have arrived. Arrive within 15-30 minutes of the event and stay for at least 45 minutes to an hour. If you don't, it may appear that you don't care enough. Don't be the first or last to leave.

Eat, drink, and be merry. The reason for this party is to interact and socialize with your employer and associates outside of work. Move around, chit chat, and remember to SMILE. Generally, limit conversations with any one person or group to five minutes to avoid monopolizing others' time and your own.

Network. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet people and develop new professional relationships. Make conversation with strangers – you never know who you might run into. This may be your only chance to mingle with upper management. Introduce yourself, express your appreciation for your job, and thank them for the invitation.

Eat in moderation. This isn't the time to go crazy with hors d'oeuvres and finger food. Same goes for alcohol, so set a two-drink maximum, if any. Know your limit – becoming the life of the party may result in a bad reputation that you can't shake off. Hold your drink in your left hand to avoid cold, wet handshakes. And don't double-dip!

Keep it professional. Remember, this is an office event. Professional

Office Party Etiquette

Don't put your job in jeopardy by committing etiquette blunders and social mistakes.

Simply put:

All office parties are still business events, so remember and use these tips:

- RSVP promptly.
- Dress for the occasion.
- Arrive in a timely manner (not too late) and don't leave too early or too late.
- Socialize and network with everyone in a pleasant way – you never know who you might meet.
- Watch your food and alcohol intake. Yes, it's a party, but not a kegger.
- Avoid anything too personal, controversial, or idiotic.
- Thank your host/hostess, employer, or party organizers.

behavior is mandatory. You never know who might be watching or listening.

Say, "Thank you." Don't leave without thanking your employer, host/hostess, or party organizers. If appropriate, send a "thank you" card or e-mail. Sincerity and politeness are always appreciated.

Follow up. If you met people at the party who you agreed to contact, do so in a timely manner.

If you enjoy yourself at the party, great! If not, it's just an hour out of your life that may benefit you for much longer.

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