



# West Point

ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES

## Social Etiquette

**Use Courtesy Words.** Please, thank you, No thank you, You're welcome, excuse me, and may I? are the building blocks of civility. Use them with everyone you meet, including those who provide you with service.

**Dress Appropriately.** The Army is a conservative organization. Use good judgment. Civilian dresses can be elegant, flattering, and tasteful. If too revealing, adding a wrap or evening jacket may be a good idea. Remember, an appropriately dressed date is a good reflection on you. For men at formal military events, the civilian equivalent is a tuxedo or tailored suit. Shined shoes and good grooming finish the look.

**Keep Chivalry Alive.** Men, offer your arm to your date. A steady arm is much appreciated by females walking in high heels – especially in winter. On the sidewalk, a man walks nearest the street to protect her from hazards. Note: These are guidelines for social etiquette which may differ from business or military etiquette.

**Hold the Door.** As a woman approaches a door to a building or car, open the door and allow her to enter. In a car, when you arrive at your destination, offer your hand to assist her in getting out.

**Hold the Chair.** Men, seat the lady to your right. When a woman first approaches the table or is returning to her seat, assist her by pulling the chair out, then easing the chair forward as she sits down.

**Unplug.** Formal receptions and banquets are not the place to be checking and sending text messages. No one's company is more important than the person in your real world. Try socializing – face to face! And don't text under the table.

**Polish Your Table Manners.** Manners at the table speak volumes about a person. What will your manners say about you? Good table manners are based on respect, courtesy, and common sense. Questions? Drop by the Cadet Hostess Office for a quick refresher on dining skills – especially if you're escorting a VIP or seated at the head table.

**Wait for Everyone to Be Served.** Don't begin eating until everyone at your table has been served. Digging in just because you're hungry makes you appear selfish and impatient. Watch your host for cues and pace yourself with others.

**Participate in Toasts.** As a group, raise your beverage glass and join in the toasts. Ladies, if offered a "Toast to the Ladies" do not drink to yourself. If a solemn toast is offered to Fallen Comrades, be quiet and respectful while raising your glass of water.

**Pass Gracefully Through the Receiving Line.** When greeting an officer, offer a firm handshake, make good eye contact, and say, "Good evening, Colonel." A few cordial words are nice, but do not linger and hold up the line



# West Point

ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES

behind you. Subsequently (or if a name and rank is forgotten) addressing them as “Sir” or “Ma’am” is perfectly acceptable. Remind your date that he/she does not shake hands with the line aide. That privilege is reserved for the host. Refer to Bugle Notes.

**Know Your Limits.** If you are 21 or older and choose to drink alcohol, this is a perfect opportunity to show that you know how to drink like a responsible adult. Anyone under the legal age is not allowed to drink alcohol.

**Have Fun and Dance!** Don’t opt out of the fun by insisting you can’t dance. If you don’t ask your date to dance, someone else will. Learn to social dance like a poised and polished future officer – lessons are available through the Cadet Hostess Office.