The purpose of introducing people is to give them an opportunity to know each other. Beyond just stating names of the two parties, the person making the introduction is often obligated to establish an acquaintance and help the two parties initiate a conversation.

**The Art of Making Introductions: Four Steps**

The basic protocol of introductions calls for introducing the ‘lesser-ranking’ (socially, professionally, by age or seniority) to the ‘higher-ranking’ person. Here are four steps:

1. First, state the name of the person being introduced to. This is the ‘higher-ranking’ person.
2. Second, say “I would like to introduce” or, “please meet” or, “this is,” etc.
3. Third, state the name of the person being introduced. This is the ‘lower-ranking’ person.
4. Finally, offer some details about each, as appropriate. As I wrote in a previous article, add a snippet of information about a topic of common interest between the two parties. Do not elaborate. This will help them connect and pursue a conversation.

The foremost principle of etiquette for making introductions lies in understanding reverence and respect. Here are some guidelines.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Higher Ranking Person** | **Lower Ranking Person** |  | **Example: Introduce lower-ranking person to higher-ranking person** |
| An older person | A younger person |  | “Grandma, this is my neighbour, John” |
| A senior professional | A junior professional |  | “Mrs. President, this is Mr. Analyst” |
|  |  |  |  |
| A customer | A team of employees |  | “Mr. Customer, this is my sales team” |
|  |  |  |  |
| A guest | A host |  | “Ms. New Yorker, this is my daughter, Sarah” |
| A guest from out-of-town | A local guest |  | “Mr. Australian, this is my neighbour Janet” |
|  |  |  |  |
| Peer from another company | Peer from your company |  | “Mr. IBMer, this is Ms. Edwards” |

When introducing people of equal seniority or status, you may introduce either person to the other.

**Making Introductions: A Few Examples**

* Introduce a younger person to an older person. “Grandma, please meet Alicia and Carlos, my neighbors.”
* Introduce a relatively junior professional to a senior professional. “Ms. Director, I would like to introduce Mr. Nakamura, the Chief Product Architect for our software division.”
* Introduce an employee to a customer. “Mr. Sung, I would like to introduce our plastics engineering team. This is Mark Smith, Jessica Ramos and Liang Zhu. All three participated in last week’s teleconference regarding product definition.”
* Introduce a host to a guest. “Elaine, I don’t think you have met my daughter, Anna. Anna arranged for all the food at this festival party. Anna, Elaine is my Project Manager.”
* Introduce a local guest to a guest from out-of-town. “Charlie, this is Debbie. Debbie is my colleague from work. Debbie, Charlie is visiting me from New York. We shared an apartment when we were at Columbia together.”
* Introduce a peer from your company to a peer from another organization. “Melissa, I would like you to meet Steve, our Systems Engineer. Steve, Melissa Hoffmann is from Marketing. She is our Account Manager for Wal-Mart.”

## Gender Distinction

Customarily, a number of people introduce a man to a woman out of respect, regardless of the guidelines presented above.

When introducing a man and a woman at work, consider their positions and seniorities alone. Outside of work, it may be more appropriate to introduce a man to a woman, in contradiction to the above guidelines. Be judicious and sensitive.

## Concluding Thoughts

Many people have difficulty introducing people to one another and helping initiate a conversation. With some practice and a sense of social and/or professional ranking, you too can master the art of introduction.