

# The Secret to Networking at Social Events

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When you meet a potential contact at a business event, you know what to do. You deliver your elevator pitch and set up a time to talk more. However, when you run into someone interesting at a social gathering, things can become more complicated.

While funerals and 12-step meetings are awkward places to do business, there are plenty of occasions that fall somewhere in between. How can you take advantage of opportunities at parties or your child's baseball game without coming across as being too pushy?

Discover the secret to networking at social events. **Use these tips to make connections that will help you to advance your career.**

### Help Others:

1. **Share information.** Maybe you'll find a natural opening for discussing trends in your industry or demonstrating your expertise. Maybe you'll accomplish more by explaining how to grow tomatoes in the shade or recommending a great movie you found on Netflix.
2. **Offer referrals.** Spread the word about businesses and services you like.  
**Personal testimonials are more reliable than online reviews.**
3. **Pitch in.** Passing around food trays or joining the planning committee is a great way to make mingling easier at parties or parent meetings. Your contributions will be remembered.

4. **Pay attention.** Simple gestures count too. **You can make a positive impression just by listening closely to what other guests have to say.** Ask relevant questions and focus on their message instead of preparing your own response.
5. **Show enthusiasm.** Others will find you more attractive if you're having fun. Check that your body language is warm and friendly. Use smiles and eye contact to let others know that you welcome conversation.

### **Follow Up:**

1. **Ask your friends.** If you and someone you just met have contacts in common, you may be able to rely on them to help you stay in touch. That could even include children and pets if they go to the same schools and dog parks.
2. **Explore mutual interests.** Your initial conversation may also reveal areas of common ground. **Building relationships is often most successful when you have regular interactions** like attending the same gym or volunteering at the same community center.
3. **Go online.** Researching someone online can be constructive as long as you respect their privacy. Learn more about them from public sources like their company website or news articles.
4. **Exchange contact information.** Before you hand out any business cards, assess the situation to see if you're going too far too fast. If your new contact seems receptive, you might offer your phone number or email and suggest a casual coffee date.

### **Other Tips for Networking at Social Events:**

1. **Practice regularly.** Networking skills can be developed. Chatting with other

parents at the park is a low-risk way to train for more challenging professional communications.

2. **Focus on quality.** Networking is usually more rewarding when you concentrate on who you're talking with now instead of trying to work the whole room. **A small number of mutually supportive relationships is more valuable than having a lot of superficial contacts.**
3. **Circulate more.** It will be easier to allow relationships to develop gradually and naturally if you feel like you have an abundance of opportunities. Experiment with accepting more invitations and hosting your own gatherings. See what a difference it can make in widening your circle.
4. **Respect boundaries.** Be sensitive to the purpose of any event and the comfort level of others. Honoring their needs will help you to make a positive impression.

Strengthen your network by learning how to use social events to build relationships. You'll be helping yourself and others as long as you take a genuine and generous approach.