

PROTOCOL



THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

DUTIES OF A DISTINGUISHED GUEST CHAIRMAN

AND

PROTOCOL

FOREWARD

This resume has been prepared with the thought that it could prove to be a helpful guide to you in all functions planned by a Post, District, County Council, Area, Department, or even on the National level. When guests and/or high-ranking officers of The American Legion are invited to these functions, you should offer your personal services for this assignment. If you will follow the suggestions in this resume, you will acquire the necessary finesse to enable you to put on a smooth-running banquet, dinner, luncheon or some special ceremony, including Installation of Officers.

Note: The following subjects are not necessarily in chronological order to staff of three (3) to five (5) or more persons are required

INTRODUCTION

The duties and responsibilities of a Distinguished Guest Chairman are many. A dull introduction does not create in the listener's mind a commanding image of the one making the presentation; Neither does it lend prestige to the organization represented; nor will it elicit proper respect for the one who deserves public recognition.

In the event a Master of Ceremonies is not appointed by the local organization committee, then the Chairman of the Distinguished Guest Committee should prepare for the necessary introductions to be made. It is on occasions such as banquets, dinners, luncheons, or special events that a Distinguished Guest Chairman is called on to serve; it is on these occasions that you are judged by the public and the members of the organization.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Before we presume to present our guest(s), there is a positive need for us to do some research work concerning the guest speaker's background: that is, the kind of experience he or she has had in professional life; offices held in the American Legion or other groups; also his or her "official" standing in the community in which they live. This applies also to other dignitaries to be introduced.

When the biographical material is obtained, we should carefully evaluate it in order to bring out, in the presentation, the salient features of his career and background. Then you should prepare a brief, interest-catching account of the guest you are to introduce.

The principal speaker should be given the kind of introduction that will allow the audience to anticipate the subject he is to cover and to await with interest what he has to say. Never, under any circumstances, "steal the speaker's thunder" by going into details of the significant points to be covered in his address.

PREPARATION OF MATERIAL

In the event the guest of honor or principal speaker is an officer in The American Legion, it is suggested that you obtain a copy of his or her biographical sketch. This can usually be obtained from the Department Headquarters; or, you may search through former Department Rosters. If the information is not available through these sources, you should contact the prospective guest personally to obtain the information.

You should prepare careful notes, then organize the introduction in such a way that it will have continuity. You should have the material before you on the podium, perhaps typed on a 3" x 5" card for convenience, depicting the guest's prominence, his background, and most assuredly, the absolutely correct title which he holds currently. His or her name should NEVER be mispronounced!

WHO IS TO BE INTRODUCED?

All persons present who are not members of your organization are guests. They should be treated as guests and accorded all courtesy. Let them know that you appreciate their visit. This includes any visiting member of another Post, District and Area. Any Department officer, and any member of an important Department Committee or Commission; these people must be recognized.

DEFINITIONS

In accordance with Protocol, strict adherence should be observed in order to give due order of preference and recognition in the introduction and presentation of guest. Note the following definitions:

To Introduce - To lead and to make known formally. To present formally. To present formally as at Convention. A formal preliminary treatise. To act as a guide.

To Present - To put before a person for acceptance. To make or present a gift.

Presentation - A formal introduction where the background is fully gone into.

Distinguished - Marked, notable for outstanding service to mankind and to The American Legion in general.

Famous - Eminent; illustrious (known far and wide among people everywhere), such as “He is widely and popularly known...”, “His/Her, excellence or superiority is renowned in his/her chosen profession in the field of _____”.

Eminent (ence) - Implies even greater conspicuousness for an outstanding quality or character, such as “He is famous . . . renowned . . .”, “He is a celebrated personage who has distinguished himself/herself...etc.”

THOSE INVITATIONS

If the Distinguished Guest Chairman is to send written invitations, the official letterhead, stationery and envelope of the organization should be used. Nothing else! Obtain the list of those to be invited as guests from your organization's committee. You should carefully check their initial, full name, title and correct address. Keep a duplicate copy of each letter. State in your letter that the courtesy of a reply would be appreciated, so that the Arrangement Committee for the affair may plan seating of guests in accordance with protocol, whether or not dining is involved.

If no reply has been received a week before the event, you should follow up with another letter or a telephone call, stating who you are, and ask whether "we may expect his attendance as an invited guest. We desire to know for the Arrangement Committee".

The Chairman of the Distinguished Guest Committee should appoint a committee of not more than five (5) personable representatives to serve on the Reception Committee, if the affair is to be a large one. YOU should greet every guest upon arrival, and see that they are properly escorted by a member of the Reception Committee to his/her seat, to be designated by a place card if the occasion is a dinner, banquet or luncheon.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

If the affair is one where special ceremonies are conducted, the Chairman of the Distinguished Guest Committee and members of the Reception Committee should greet guests at the entrance of the hall, auditorium, etc., and someone should stay with them if they are to be escorted to the platform. The Sergeant-At-Arms should be alerted to his task for escort, but only when the command has been given by the presiding officer!

The Distinguished Guest Chairman should be in charge of seating guests at the head table. The Chairman is responsible for preparing place cards to be put on the table in front of the place setting, according to protocol.

If the Guest of Honor or speaker for the occasion is from another city, the Distinguished Guest Chairman, at the request of the organization's committee, should make arrangements for hotel accommodations and transportation, unless the guest prefers otherwise. If the hotel bill, meals and transportation are to be paid for by the organization, the Distinguished Guest Chairman should arrange for this in advance. (This, of course, must have the approval of the organization).

The Distinguished Guest Chairman should have fully prepared his introduction(s) by this time. He should have everything in readiness for the presentation and introduction of guest(s). Advance planning and careful preparation will eliminate confusion, and create a most favorable impression of your organization and of you particularly.

At all meetings, special events, etc., the Distinguished Guest Chairman should see that a decanter of water, with glass, is placed directly in front of the main speaker, or guest of honor.

This is a must!

POINTERS ON PROTOCOL

At a large gathering where a number of guests are to be seated at the head table, the guest of honor, or the principal speaker, should be seated at the center of the table, to the right of the Master of Ceremonies (if one has been appointed), or next to the Distinguished Guest Chairman. Should the guest speaker be the National Commander of the American Legion, then members of his official family should sit to his right. If his Personal Aide is with him, he should be seated to the right of the National Commander. The Department Commander, then the Department Adjutant should be seated to the right of the Aide. If the Aide is not present, the Department Commander and Department Adjutant should be seated to the right of the National Commander. Next should be to his right, the Department Vice Commander Representing Women; to her right, the Area Commander (also known as Department Vice Commander) of whatever area the affair is being held. To his/her right should be the Department Judge Advocate; then the Department Chaplain; Department Historian; and the District Commander of the locale in which the affair is held – if space at the table permits.

To the left of the Master of Ceremonies, or the Distinguished Guest Chairman, should be the Honorable Governor of the State; The Honorable Mayor of the City; the highest ranking military officer; United States Senator; Representative of Congress; State Senator; State Assemblyman; Chamber of Commerce Representative; Service Club Representative; etc.

SEATING

FACING THE AUDIENCE

To the **RIGHT** of the
Distinguished Guest Chairman

Guest of Honor / Principal Speaker

National Commander's Aide

The Department Commander

The Department Adjutant

The National Executive Committeeman

Department Vice Commander–Women

The Area Commander

Department Judge Advocate

Department Chaplain

Department Historian

District Commander

To the **LEFT** of the
Distinguished Guest Chairman

The Honorable Governor

The Honorable Mayor of the City

Highest Ranking Military Officer

United States Senator

Representative of Congress

State Senator

State Assemblyman

Chamber of Commerce

Representative

Service Club Representative

Other Organizations, etc.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AND SPEAKERS

INVITATIONS

1. Write or call your guest or speaker as soon as you have decided on your program. If you call, follow-up with a written confirmation. Tell them something about your group and its' objectives; how many you expect at the meeting; and if Juniors, Post members or the Public will also be present. Tell them why the group would appreciate having them as a guest or speaker.
2. Tell them if there are to be other guests or speakers on the same program, and if so, whom.
3. Let them know the time allotted for their speech or remarks, the time that the meeting will start, and probable time of adjournment.
4. Find out if your guest would like to be excused early. They may have other commitments and not wish to stay for the business or entertainment part of the meeting.
5. Request confirmation, and ask for material that may be used for advance publicity or in introducing them. Ask if they object to being interviewed by the press or being photographed.
6. Tell them whether or not a question and answer period is planned following their talk.
7. Give your guest or speaker some idea of what you would like to have them to talk about.
8. Let your guest know the type of meeting – formal, semi-formal, street clothes, or if it is custom to wear hats in your area.
9. Let them know, in writing, the place of the meeting, including the address and directions of how to get there.

10. If the trip necessitates an overnight stay, suggest type of accommodation that is available, and make the reservations if the guest so desires and informs you. Find out if they need transportation. Ask if they are traveling alone, and if not, who will accompany them.
11. Let your guest(s) know who their escort will be, and for whom to ask upon arrival. If possible, tell them who will introduce them, and send them a copy of your program.
12. A day or two before the meeting, call or write your guest(s), reminding them of the up-coming meeting.
13. If tickets are needed for your guests, see that complimentary ones are provided in advance.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING

1. Check to see that your meeting place is well lighted and ventilated.
2. Check to see that the podium light works; your guest may wish to use notes.
3. Check to see that sufficient chairs are available, and that there are seats reserved for your guests both on the platform and in the audience.
4. Check the public address system and be sure that it is working properly.
5. If your speaker has asked for special equipment such as a projector, screen, blackboard, etc., see that it is set up and in working order..
6. Have a container of water and a glass available.
7. Arrange for distribution of programs in an orderly manner.
8. Be sure the kitchen or refreshment committee is seated near an exit so that they may leave at a pre-arranged signal without a lot of fuss and confusion.
9. If you have made arrangements for overnight accommodations for your guest(s), allow them some time to be alone and relax. Be sure to consult them before arranging parties or other outside activities.
10. If you cannot meet your guest(s) yourself, be sure to appoint someone to escort them to all meetings, and to their plane or train when departing.

11. Arrange to have guest(s) met at the door. In some instances, a Door Committee meets them and directs them to the Distinguished Guest Chairman, who pins on a corsage and seats them. If they are to be escorted at the beginning of the meeting, they are seated in a group at the rear of the room. See that they are introduced to the persons seated on either side of them. If the guest(s) arrive early enough, the Escort or Distinguished Guest Chairman will see that the guest(s) meet the Chairman, President and other members before the meeting
12. Instruct your Sgt-At-Arms to notify the Presiding Officer immediately of the arrival of a guest.
13. If a gift or corsage is to be presented, arrange for the bill to be submitted at another meeting, not when the guest is present. If a corsage or corsages are to be presented, one person should be designated to present and pin them. Arrange to have this done before the meeting starts, and before the guest is presented to the Presiding Officer.
14. The Presiding Officer may accept a corsage, but he/she does not wear it unless the guest also wears one. (In case your guest is man, he should be pinned with a boutonniere.) White is a safe color for a corsage, since it will blend with any color your guest(s) may wear.
15. If your guest brings a companion, be sure they are introduced to the persons on either side of them. Ascertain their correct name, and if they have a title. Be sure that they are introduced to the Assembly.
16. If the speaker or guest(s) wish to leave at the end of their part of the program, thank them on behalf of your group and have the "Escort" conduct them to their transportation.
17. If you are giving your speaker a fee, expense money, or a gratuity, present it in an envelope before they leave the meeting.

18. Guests should never be expected to participate in drawings or raffles.

ESCORTING DISTINGUISHED GUESTS OR SPEAKER

1. The Sgt. At Arms or the Distinguished Guest Chairman, when escorting, will keep the guest on his/her right. If he takes hold of the guest's arm, it will be the left arm.
2. Never walk between the Chair and the Assembly.
3. The highest ranking group of guests being presented to the Chair are brought up the RIGHT side of the room and presented to the right of the Presiding Officer. If necessary to get to the LEFT side of the room, take the guests to the rear of the room, then up the left side, not to cross in front of the Chair. If space dictates that lesser ranking guests must be seated to the left of the Chair, reverse the escort procedure. **THE GUEST OF HONOR IS ALWAYS PRESENTED TO THE RIGHT OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Your Distinguished Guest takes precedence over any other dignitary, regardless of title.
4. There are two methods of escorting guests. Both are correct:
DOUBLE LINE – Sgt.-At-Arms and Marshal lead, Sgt.-At-Arms on the right; Marshal on the left; Distinguished Guest Chairman behind the Marshal with the Distinguished Guest on her right.
SINGLE LINE – Sgt.-At-Arms leads; Distinguished Guest Chairman second; Guest third and Marshal last.
5. If the guests to be escorted are American Legion Officers, escort in the following order, with the lowest ranking group first:
 - a. District Chairmen
 - b. District Officers (Not including District President)
 - c. Past Department Presidents or Commanders
 - d. Hospital Representatives and Poppy Production Managers
 - e. Current Department Chairmen
 - f. District Presidents or Commanders

- g. Current Department Officers.
- h. Current National Officers or Chairmen
- i. National Executive Committee person
- j. Department President or Commander
- k. National President or Commander

When there are two or more guests in any of the above groups, the Distinguished Guest Chairman escorts the Chairman or Senior member of the group and asks the other members of the group to follow right behind.

- 6. The Distinguished Guest (or Guest of Honor) is always escorted alone. The Assembly rises in recognition of the officer when the National Officer is escorted. In the Unit, they rise when the District President is escorted.
- 7. Upon reaching the Presiding Officer's station, the Sgt.-At-Arms and Marshal step aside and wait while the Distinguished Guest Chairman presents the guests to the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer shakes the hand of each guest as presented, and seats them before the next guest is presented. After the complete group has been presented and seated, the Sgt.-At-Arms and Marshal about-face, and followed by the Distinguished Guest Chairman, return to the rear of the room to await the next group of guest(s).

The Presiding Officer does not present any guest to the Assembly until all the guests have been presented and seated.

- 8. When a guest is not a member of the organization, the Distinguished Guest is escorted FIRST and ALONE.
- 9. Be sure to check Organizational Protocol Rank – i.e., Congressional Medal of Honor Holder, Gold Star Mothers, etc.

10. The Presiding Officer, Distinguished Guest Chairman, Musician, Sgt.-At-Arms and Marshal should work out a system of signals so they know what is expected of them at all times.

CORRECT INTRODUCTIONS OR PRESENTATIONS BY DISTINGUISHED GUEST CHAIRMAN

1. INTRODUCE one not known to the Assembly.
2. PRESENT one already known to the group.
3. When you introduce or present Guests of Honor, they rise. You introduce the highest ranking guest first and go down the list. If your guests are each to say a few words of greeting or congratulations, then start with the lowest rank and go up the list, thus the last expression comes from the top-ranking officer or guest.
4. Introduction or presentation of honored guests should be gracious, but short. The higher the officer, the shorter the introduction.
5. When introducing or presenting a speaker, be sure you have the name and title correct. Stimulate the audience interest, but do not give the speaker's talk. Identify the speaker, give their qualifications thru a brief history or biography. Announce the subject, and last of all, give the speaker's complete name while you are still facing the audience, then turn to the person you are introducing, repeat the name only (this is the speaker's cue to rise). You lead in the applause and then be seated.
6. The Auxiliary President always introduces or presents National, Department or District Officers and Chairmen when they are visiting a meeting.
7. The membership always rises in recognition of the National, Department or District Officers when they are introduced.

8. When Department Officers or Chairmen are present at their own Unit or District meetings, they should be escorted at the first meeting after their election or appointment, and upon the occasion of official visits of other Department Officers or Chairmen, special meetings, installations or when there are distinguished outside guests. At all other times, they take their place in the audience as a member of the Unit or District. They should, however, be introduced from their place in the audience. When visiting Units other than their own, they should be escorted.
9. Remember that an error in protocol is not a major crime. If you are the Officer or Chairman offended, be gracious.
10. When the speaker concludes, you rise and thank him/her. If a gift is to be presented, do it at this time.
11. If newspaper or newsletter publicity appears following your guest's appearance, or if photos or informal pictures are taken by members during the meeting, it is a nice gesture to send these to your guest.
12. A letter of appreciation from you is a must; and an informal note from the President or Chairman is a nice gesture. Remember, your organization is indebted to any guest, speaker or entertainer who has taken the time, trouble and expense to attend your meeting.
13. When there are distinguished guests present, Chairmen and Officers making reports address the Chair only – “Madame President”. The only exception given by Robert's Rules of Order is that the speaker may address the Chair – “Madame President, Ladies and Gentlemen”.

INSPIRATIONS

INVOCATIONS, CLOSING THOUGHTS AND GRACE

1. All should be short and should be generalized. Poems are acceptable if well chosen and well delivered.
2. INVOCATION – The Assembly rises at the direction of the Chair, who waits for complete silence before stating the name of the person who will be giving the invocation. An invocation is an earnest entreaty or prayer calling for assistance and guidance. It is given at the beginning of the meeting, concluding with “Amen”.
3. GRACE – The Assembly remains seated. Grace is a blessing asked or thanks offered before a meal, and technically becomes a benediction if offered after a meal. If “Blessing” is used rather than “Grace”, it must conform to religious precedent. Conclude with “Amen”.
4. INSPIRATION – The Assembly may remain seated or be requested to stand if offered at the beginning of the meeting, but should remain seated if used at the close. An inspiration is an expression along spiritual or ethical lines. “Amen” is not used at the conclusion.

RECEIVING LINE – RECEPTION – LEGION AUXILIARY

A reception line should consist of those selected for the occasion. Family, Government and other Official Organization or Group.

1. Member states name to the RECEPTION CHAIRMAN who is at the head of the line.
2. Reception Chairman states member’s name to Distinguished Guest Chairman.
3. Distinguished Guest Chairman presents member to President
4. President introduces member to HONORED GUEST.
5. Member continues down line, shaking hands with each member of

the line.

WHEN YOU ARE THE SPEAKER OR THE GUEST

1. Be sure to answer all invitations in writing, so there will be no chance of your showing up on the wrong date, or at the wrong hour. Reaffirm the topic of your speech. Send a small card with your title and a short history of yourself, or your reason for making the appearance. This will help the person introducing you.
2. Always be on time. The organization may have other speakers or business to take care of at the same meeting, and will not appreciate your making them late. It is not a good idea to arrive too early, either, since you may interrupt preparations and spoil the effect the Unit or organization may wish to present to you.
3. Carefully prepare your speech. Organize it, practice it, time it. Organize notes rather than take a verbatim speech. However, if the press wished a copy, you might have one to give them, but never try to give the one that you carry verbatim, and never, never read one. Work out a good introduction and a strong closing. Remember, your last words will be remembered by your audience the longest. Use a bit of humor and imagination, but leave the entertaining to the entertainers. Use stories and quotations with color. Ask questions that can be answered with yes or no. Watch the time limit and summarize your remarks. Avoid references to any controversial issue such as politics, religion, labor disputes, personal conflicts, or any remark that may be objectionable to any member of the audience. Remember, you are a guest and you should act as though you were in a friend's house.
4. If you use notes, keep them on small cards. Mark your copy with a line between words or phrases, indicating where to breathe. Underline important words or thoughts you wish to emphasize. The last word of a sentence is important. Don't lose it by running out of breathe.

5. After you have written your speech, read it aloud. Change it around for better emphasis, if needed. You may rewrite it many times, then practice it before a mirror. After you are satisfied with it, make your notes and then practice some more. When you stand up to give your speech at the meeting, you will be self-confident and your audience will know it.
6. Dress carefully if you are a woman. Avoid tight, short skirts, hats that hide your face, noisy inappropriate jewelry. Plain colors are better than prints when appearing before an audience. Try it out first, until it feels comfortable. Dresses that ride up, hats that slip, shoes that hurt, etc., take your mind off of your subject; and the audience will react the same way. Don't wear dangling earrings and rhinestones are not worn before five.
7. Before speaking, avoid if possible, such foods as lettuce, starches, ice cream and milk. Alcohol will not make you a better speaker; it will only leave a bad impression with the audience.
8. Remove your top coat before being escorted, but leave your hat and gloves on.
9. Watch your posture while you are seated. This is where so many well-groomed and otherwise proper women fail. Sit tall, with the calf of the leg against the chair. Never cross your legs and don't sit so far back in the chair that your legs stick out like a doll in front. Cross your ankles, or sit with one foot tucked behind the other; or with your feet flat, with one foot slightly ahead of the other. (Be careful to keep your knees together).
10. When you are speaking, if you are wearing a suit, keep the coat buttoned, your top coat off, your hat on, and your gloves on.

11. When you rise to speak, rise slowly. Don't jump to your feet. Relax, then stand tall. Posture and body position are important. Step away from support, so you don't lean. Stand firmly on both feet, one foot slightly behind the other. Take a deep breathe, and pause until you have the complete attention of the audience. Use eye contact and you will find that they are friendly, interested people.
12. When you start to speak, you address only the person who introduced you, or called on you to speak, not all the VIP's present. The only exception would be "Madame President, Ladies and Gentlemen".
13. Speak slowly and loud enough to be heard throughout the room. If you are using a microphone, speak naturally and directly into it. Vary your pitch. By beginning a sentence on a low pitch, you can raise it when you need emphasis. Don't fuss with papers, jewelry, glasses, etc. This distracts the audience, but do use gestures for emphasis and description. Learn to pause. This gives the audience time to catch up, and gives you time to glance at your notes, as well as a chance to control your breathing. Use words that the audience will understand, but do not talk down to them. Avoid using monotone.
14. Always be yourself. The audience can feel when you are sincere and when you are acting. Be enthusiastic. This will take some advance preparation, since you can be sincere only about the things you find interesting and like. Get to know your subject beforehand through personal contact and participation. Never try to speak about a subject you are not familiar with or that you are not enthusiastic about.
15. Upon concluding, return to your seat slowly and gracefully. If you are presented with a gift, be sure to open it before making an acceptance speech. Always thank the group if you have received flowers, corsage, hospitality, or gift. Then, when you get home, write a note of

thanks to the group for their courtesies, and for the privilege of addressing them.

16. If you must leave early, notify the Chairman ahead of time, and then pick a break in the meeting and leave as quietly as possible. If there is no break in the meeting, the President will be glad to have you escorted out early.
17. If action is necessary or desired as a result of your report or presentation, YOU move the action at the conclusion of your report (if you are a member of that group).

Retyped by Richard Benninger 8/09