

Manners Matter

Activity Guide
Ages 9 to 12

Meeting and Greeting

The Right Foot

Have you ever wished that two of your friends knew each other? One of the things that will make you popular is your ability to get along with a lot of different people. It is also nice to be able to build bridges between your friends who have common interests. But sometimes it's awkward making that introduction. If you've ever been introduced to someone with only the exchange of your names, you know it's often difficult to come up with something to talk about afterward.

Civil Action

The best way to make a successful introduction is to tell the people you're introducing something about the others. With your friend and a helper, take turns



practicing introductions. Assign roles to the two people with whom you're practicing. For example, pretend they are two people with whom you share different classes at school. You might say, "Fred, this is Sarah. She is in my music class. She plays flute." Then you might say, "Sarah, Fred is the pitcher on my baseball team." This introduction gives each person a little extra information about the other. It is a foundation for a conversation about music or sports.

Once you're comfortable, introduce at least one of your friends to someone he or she doesn't know. Also, ask a friend to introduce you to someone new.

Keep these tips in mind for a pleasant conversation:

Life Skill

- Communication

Project Skill

- Making introductions

Objective

- Participant introduces people and makes conversation.

Success Indicators

- Participant introduces people in a way that stimulates follow-up conversation.

Eti-Kit

- A helper and one other person for a practice conversation

Courtesy Corner

- "Small talk" is anything but. The ability to chat in an interesting, friendly fashion opens doors to new friendships, personal advancement, and jobs.

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- Repeat the name of a new person when you are introduced. That way, you are more likely to remember it. Remembering a new acquaintance's name makes him or her feel valued and helps you make a good impression.
- Be a good listener. Talk about your hobbies, but ask about the other person's, too. Pay attention to what he or she says.
- Keep an open posture. Don't fold your arms when speaking to someone else. It might make you appear angry or aloof. Smile. Lean in a bit and nod to show interest.
- Ask questions about the subject you're discussing.
- Don't interrupt or finish another person's sentences.
- Focus at first on "safe" subjects of conversation: hobbies, school, weather, current events. Reading books and newspapers means you'll always have something to talk about. Avoid discussing religion, health problems, or what things cost with people you don't know well. Do not spread gossip or tell tasteless jokes (these are jokes that are dirty, gross, racist, or rude).

Extra Polish

Watch a television talk show or listen to a radio program in which a host interviews guests one-on-one. What types of conversation starters do you observe? What communication strengths does the host have?

Finishing School

Share

- What subjects were most popular in your conversations?
- What did you like most about the people you met?

Process

- How can you overcome shyness in social situations?
- How did you decide what to talk about with the people you met?

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- A sense of humor is always helpful when you're talking with others. What other things make you a good communicator? (Remember that communicating is listening as well as talking.)

Generalize

- Why is it important to get along with people you don't know?
- In what other parts of your life are good communication skills important?

Apply

- How can being good at conversation help you in other social situations?
- How can you use what you learned to be a better listener?