

(F) TIMES OF ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

It has been mentioned before, but it bears repeating: punctuality above all! As Louis XVIII so aptly put it, "Punctuality is the politeness of kings and the duty of all good people."

While it is not necessary to be precisely on time for receptions, one should not arrive too late; it is not pleasant for the hosts to wait in empty reception rooms, and they are always appreciative of guests who arrive on time. By the same token, there is no need to linger beyond the time specified in the invitation, unless expressly invited to do so, even if the buffet is still undepleted.

Some dinner guests make a practice of arriving very late. Such behaviour is extremely ill-bred when one is invited to a private meal, since delicate dishes cannot wait. It also indicates a lack of consideration for the other guests, who are forced, so to speak, to wait upon the latecomer's convenience.

As a general rule, a host/hostess does not wait for a tardy guest more than half an hour beyond the time indicated in the invitation, and the latter must take the meal where it is at the moment of his/her arrival. The guest, for his/her part, must do everything possible to let the hosts know of his/her situation.

There are countries where it is understood that guests should not arrive until some time after the hour indicated in the invitation and where there is a wide latitude in this regard. Officers can only observe the rules of society in the country they are living in, since they are not called upon to change them. However, they should not practice these habits in countries where they are not in vogue.

Generally speaking, when a diplomatic agent receives an invitation from a head of mission, he/she should arrive early (before any outside guests, or at least five minutes ahead of time). Similarly, he/she should always remain at dinners and almost always at receptions until the last outside guests have gone. At any other official reception or dinner, one never leaves before the Head of State or the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs or, in other words, before the guest of honour.

(G) RECEIVING LINE

For some occasions, notably receptions on the national day, a receiving line is formed to enable guests to present their compliments. The line should be kept as short as possible, since it is not designed for conversation. When there is a guest of honour, the order of the receiving line is: host, guest of honour, hostess and, finally, spouse of the guest of honour. Note that the host is always the first person in the receiving line.

It is not usual to have a receiving line at a dinner.

(H) TABLE PLAN AND PLACE CARDS

When a dinner is given in a diplomatic or official residence, a table plan is displayed in a prominent location, usually at the entrance. In this diagram, the host and hostess are seated at each end of the table or facing each other at the centre. The entrance to the dining room is usually clearly indicated. Guests should locate their places at table in relation to the entrance so as to be able to find them easily when the time comes. It is useful to take note of the names of