

Protocol

...the system of rules and acceptable behavior used at official ceremonies and occasions. (Cambridge Dictionary)

While *Parliamentary procedure* guides us in the correct way to conduct meetings; *Protocol* teaches the proper etiquette with which to conduct ourselves.

Protocol, is the practice of good manners.

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Tips for Club President:

- Prepare an Agenda for the meeting and distribute it to the members.
- Preside with a Script using the Agenda as the outline (don't rely on memory to accomplish club business).
- Start the meeting on time.
- Call the meeting to order and adjourn the meeting with **one rap** of the gavel.
- Reach out to chairmen prior to meetings to see if they have anything to report. Only call on those chairmen who have something to report. This process keeps your meeting running smoothly and on time.
- Stand when speaking and conducting the meeting.
- Speak clearly and slowly so that all can understand. If a microphone is available – use it! Don't assume your voice is loud enough for everyone to hear.
- Introduce those “Seated at the Head Table”. Do not present “the Head Table”.
- Present to the audience any persons they already know and introduce those they do not know.
- Do not turn over the meeting to a speaker, instead recognize the speaker and allow them to use the microphone. The President maintains control of the meeting.
- Listen intently to any presentation.
- Remain impersonal in attitude and in remarks.
- Arrange for the Parliamentarian to be seated next to her during a Business Meeting. The President may choose which side the Parliamentarian will be seated, so she can quietly advise if needed.
- Show appreciation to members who have completed a project.
- Answer correspondence in a timely manner and honor all deadlines.
- Be optimistic, friendly, enthusiastic, creative, and open to new ideas.

Tips for Club Members:

It is important for the club members to practice proper Protocol procedures when attending federation meetings (local, district, state, region, and national)

- Arrive at the meeting on time. If you must be late, enter quietly and stand at the back of the room until the speaker at the lectern is finished.
- Stay until the meeting is adjourned.
- Always wear a name tag when provided. Place your name tag on the right side about 4 inches below the shoulder.
- Wear your Federation membership pin(s) on the left over your heart.
- Be aware of the time to start the meeting and “hear” the rap of the gavel.
- Give your full attention to the chair.
- Stand to give your report when being recognized by the chair. Walk to the microphone provided when speaking.
- Adhere to any time limits.
- Address the chair by saying “Madam Chairman or Madam President” to gain recognition then continue with your comment / question.
- When speaking at a district, state, region, or national meeting you must state your name, club name and when appropriate your state federation.
- Offer assistance with club projects and functions.
- Refrain from disturbing the meeting. Do not have side conversations after the meeting has been called to order. This allows the meeting to flow smoothly. It allows other members to hear the business being discussed.
- Silence cell phones. Refrain from texting / messaging during a meeting.
- Do not walk between the head table and the audience and never approach the head table from the front.
- Honor deadlines.
- Stand when saying the Club Collect and Junior Pledge.

Invitations to Officers and Guests:

Use of e-mail or other electronic communication is often needed to establish availability of a guest. The individual should be advised whether your club will be covering all expenses (meals, travel, lodging) and whether they can bring a companion. Once established, a written communication should be mailed immediately.

The invitation should include:

- Date, Time and Location of the function.
- Type of meeting (club meeting, district meeting, workshop).

- Length of meeting.
- Dress (casual, business casual, semi-formal, or formal).
- Type of speech you wish the guest to deliver and any time limits on the agenda.
- Theme for the function. This will allow the guest to be prepared with her wardrobe.
- Travel information including driving instructions. Offer to make any necessary travel arrangements.
- Provide a program or agenda prior to the meeting and notify her if pictures or interviews are to be made.

Hosting a VIP (local, district, state, region and national)

It is the President's responsibility to extend the invitation and to prepare the program. Since the President will be presiding over the meeting and will likely have many responsibilities, she should appoint a hostess to care for the guest properly. This should be someone outgoing and knowledgeable about the organization.

- The assigned Hostess should be available at the designated time for the President to introduce her to the Guest as their hostess or aide for the event.
- The Hostess should provide a handwritten note with her name and cell number to the Guest.
- The Guest should be shown where the restroom is located and where she can store her things.
- For an overnight Guest, the President should ask her to dine with her the evening before the meeting if she is arriving by dinnertime. If other members attend, they should be informed it will be Dutch Treat unless other arrangement are made in advance.
- Provide a small gift basket or bag containing bottled water, fresh fruit, small snacks and breathe mints. Small gifts from your home area are always a nice gesture. Do not include home baked or home canned items and be sure the items are transportable.
- Courtesies...although plants and flowers are lovely, they are not easily transported. A small memento of her visit will be most appreciated. Keep the gift small and packable.

Seating the Head Table:

The presiding officer is seated to the right of the lectern; the Parliamentarian is to the left of the lectern (or seated at the pleasure of the presiding officer). Remaining officers are alternated from left to right according to rank. Guests may be placed between officers.

If the size of the room prohibits use of a head table, only the President, Parliamentarian, and Recording Secretary are to be seated at a head table in front of the room. All others are seated in reserved seating.

Note: It is important that the Secretary clearly hears and records all business taking place. If it is necessary to move her seat closer to achieve this, seat her between the Parliamentarian and the First Vice President (or President Elect in the example above).

Reserved Seating:

- Utilize reserved seating for those on the agenda who are not seated at the head table, plus International Past Presidents, Past Region and State Presidents and Directors of Junior Clubs.
- Reserved seating is also provided to those who aid the President. The President's Special Assistant should always be seated to face the President for eye contact. Others with reserved seating might include the Convention and Meeting Chairman, Protocol Chairman, Timekeepers, and any other designated assistants.
- Fill empty places at reserved tables with appointed Officers, Chairman, etc.

Tips for the Processional:

- Set the room with a center aisle or double aisles to ensure adequate walking space.
- Begin with those with reserved seating, then the sub-head table, and finally the head table, from lowest to highest rank. The last person is the highest-ranking officer for that meeting.
- Script the processional with every name and office, producing two copies, one for the Protocol Chairman who lines up the processional, and one for the Meeting Chairman or President's designee who will be announcing the processional.
- Place assistants at areas where help is needed, such as stairs up to the head table.

Tips for Opening Ceremonies and Prayers:

- God before Country; prayer should be nondenominational and all-inclusive.
- Salute the flag when it comes into view; at ease when the colors are posted.
- The National Anthem should be before the Pledge of Allegiance.
- A nondenominational grace or expression of thanks is appropriate before a meal.

Tips for General Courtesies:

- The head table should always be served first, followed by the sub-head table and reserved tables.

- Gifts should be practical, useful, and/or representative of the host Region or State and travel friendly.
- Messages for the head table should be given to the Meeting Chairman or President's Assistant.
- Do not leave or enter the meeting room when a presentation is in progress.

Tips for Dress:

- Formal: Full length dress or ensemble.
- Cocktail: Festive mid-length or shorter dress or ensemble.
- Business: Suits, conservative dress, or slacks and top with or without a jacket.
- Business Casual: Simple dress or slacks and top – no jeans.

Tips for the Protocol Chairman:

- Prepare a “protocol toolbox” for emergencies, including, tape, pins, safety pins, needle and thread, felt pads for leveling tables, extra pens and paper, sticky notes, rubber bands, bandages, sanitizer/wet wipes and other necessities as indicated.
- Develop a seating chart for the head and reserved tables that include names and titles. Provide a copy to the President for introductions.
- Create and position reserved signs or seating place cards on reserved tables or chairs and large tent cards for easy viewing on the head table.
- Provide an information sheet for each person who will be included in the processional(s) or have special seating.
- Prior to the meeting, along with the Meeting Chairman/Planner, check for functionality of microphones and lights, correct display of podium banner and any flags, suitable room temperature, availability of glasses and water for the head table, and proper placement of centerpieces to ensure clear views.

If you have any questions, contact me:

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Information in this article is adapted from the GFWC Club Manual, GFWC WV Club Manual, and other materials provided by GFWC.