



GFWC/Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs
"Unity In Diversity"

Instruction Book of Protocol and Courtesy

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An Introduction

Protocol and courtesy are two of the most mystifying parts of club work. Protocol deals with the treatment of an individual based on the office they hold, such as seating at a head table or the order of the guests in a receiving line. Courtesy, on the other hand, is a combination of good manners, appreciation, respect and tradition. Courtesy sometimes involves giving a gift as a token of appreciation.

Protocol, originally a code of diplomatic or military etiquette and precedence, embodies the idea of extending courtesy to honorees, guests, and/or participants in the order of their relative rank. Today, we use accepted protocol in GFWC Iowa because it promotes orderly procedures following the standard rules of etiquette.

When planning a Federation event, personal friendships, likes, and dislikes must not be considered. It may help to remember that the office held is being honored — not the person. The presiding officer is generally responsible for directing the application of the principles of protocol within the organization. Properly carried out, these will reflect favorably on her leadership ability, allowing introductions and meetings to run smoothly. A Protocol Chairman may be appointed to implement the plans for seating, processing, etc.

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PROTOCOL: RANK AND PRECEDENCE

The first principle of protocol is to establish the rank of the participants. For those fitting into more than one category, assign their highest rank. For example, a club officer who is Speaker of the Day would assume the higher rank of Speaker. When introducing a committee, members who may also have a higher rank would have been introduced merely as members of the committee without further accolades.

An out-of-state guest of “equal rank” as an in-state (or in-district or club) guest is given the higher rank out of courtesy to the visitor. Among equals, a higher rank is accorded to those traveling a greater distance.

The following guidelines are for the order of rank at various levels within a state or district federation:

A. The President holds the highest rank in her own organization i.e.: local club, district, or state. She is the presiding officer or hostess for functions of the organization.

B. Except for the GFWC President and the Governor of the state, the Speaker of the Day holds the highest rank below the president of the organization (GFWC/Iowa).

C. At district or local club meetings, only the GFWC President has precedence over the GFWC/Iowa President. At state meetings, the Iowa President ranks the highest.

D. The guests of the organization are presented according to their rank, as follows:

- a. State President (always the ranking officer in the state)
- b. GFWC/Iowa Executive Officers (in order of rank as listed in the by-laws)
- c. GFWC/Iowa Parliamentary Advisor
- d. Past GFWC/Iowa Presidents (introduce in order of service, beginning with the earliest dates of service through immediate past).
- e. GFWC Director of Junior Clubs
- f. GFWC and Mississippi Valley Region appointments
- g. GFWC Chairmen
- h. GFWC District Presidents

- i. GFWC District Officers (in order of rank listed in by-laws)
- j. GFWC District Parliamentary Advisor
- k. GFWC Past District Presidents
- l. GFWC/Iowa Chairman
- m. GFWC/Iowa District Chairman
- n. GFWC/Iowa Club Officers
- o. Visiting Guests

Head Table - Meals

The presiding officer sits to her right of the lectern, or in the center if no lectern is used.

The ranking guest or speaker sits to the president's right.

Other guests and officers are seated by rank alternately to the left and right of the President. If there are several guests, they may be placed between officers of the organization.

The size of the head table should be determined by the size and capacity of the room, usually not to exceed 12. If space at the head table is limited, ranking guests may be seated at a table in front of the head table. None of the lesser ranks should be seated at the head table while those of higher rank are not **unless** they are program participants.

Place cards should be used at the head table(s), to enable members to find their place at the head table more easily.

Introductions of members seated at the head table should be made from the lower rank up to the ranking guest. This may involve introducing the guests at the lower table first, then moving to the head table. It is now accepted practice to introduce a guest to the left of the presiding officer first, starting with the lowest rank, followed by those on her right. Always end the introductions with the highest ranking guest.

When introductions are given, the audience rises when the GFWC President and GFWC/Iowa President are introduced. The same courtesy is extended to the GFWC Director of Junior Clubs.

Protocol and Courtesy require that you do not approach anyone at the head table after a meeting has been called to order. Any message is to be delivered via Protocol Chairman, or President's Assistant.

It is customary to introduce the person by asking for the blessing before the meal, then proceed with the remainder of the introductions after the head table has finished the meal (or at least everyone has been served.). However, if for some reason food service is delayed it would not be incorrect to do the introductions while waiting.

A formal introduction of the speaker should be postponed until the time of the speech, but the name should be given during introductions of the head table, with the statement that this guest "will be formally introduced a little later".

When there is a GFWC or GFWC/Iowa Officer residing in a district, she should always be seated at the head table for meals. Her place would be determined by her GFWC or GFWC/Iowa office.

Head Table — Business Meetings

Normally, the elected officers are seated at a head table during the business meeting. If space does not permit that all officers can be comfortable accommodated, care should be taken to give the President and recording secretary adequate table space for their papers.

The Parliamentary Advisor should be assigned the seat immediately to the left of the lectern or to the right of the President, to be convenient for consultation in a low voice should the need occur.

Except in local club meetings, those seated at the head table should be introduced or presented to the assembly.

When the opening exercises are being conducted, during devotionals, speakers, voting, and the like, the doors should be closed.

Receiving Lines

Receiving lines should be kept as short as possible without offending anyone.

Participants are lined up according to rank. If there are several visiting dignitaries, it is acceptable to place club officers between the dignitaries to eliminate the necessity of a dignitary presenting a guest to another dignitary.

There should be a hostess with a clear voice to introduce guests to the official hostess (president) at the beginning of the line. The President then presents the guest to the honoree.

Special measures which can be used to expedite large functions include:

- The use of a second receiving line to include the chairmen and guests of lesser rank.
- The use of hostesses to encourage the lines to keep moving — comments in a receiving line should be brief.
- When in doubt, use good judgment based on a gracious recognition of those involved and common sense.

COURTESY — AN INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, it is impossible to dictate courtesy. Compiled in a list, it loses much of its meaning, because its basis is in sentiment and thoughtfulness. This is one of the reasons that it is so perplexing to many individuals. A club president wants to know what traditions have been established over the years, the the extent of involvement in continuing these traditions and in extending other courtesies remains a matter of personal choice.

As you utilize the information contained in this guide, remember that the suggestions on courtesy are not required and are never mandatory. The best courtesies are those that come from the heart —with sincerity. Proper protocol, however, should be allowed as much as possible according to standard practice.

General Courtesies to All Members

1. Each member should show respect to all members by attending meetings regularly, wearing a name tag if the club has given her one, and introducing her guests.

2. Every member should give their full attention to the individual who has the floor at any time —whether speaker, officer, or member.
3. It is impolite to do craftwork, work on laptops, or the like during meetings unless the meeting is specifically for that purpose.
4. Only begin to eat after it has been blessed and when the President has lifted her fork.
5. Every member should be interested in membership retention and expansion. She should encourage participation by all members and display warmth and friendship to current, new and prospective members.
6. Members should investigate and discuss all programs and projects prior to their implementation. Give suggestions and criticisms at the meeting, NOT afterward.
7. Members should take care of financial obligations and pay dues on time.
8. Once a member makes a commitment to participate in a particular project, she should follow through with that commitment or arrange to have a substitute take her place.
9. Special care should be used when club property is in a member's possession, and items should be returned promptly when no longer needed.
10. Members should work to preserve the good name of the club and the federation in the community. At all GFWC/Iowa and district meetings and functions sponsored by the club, members would conduct themselves in a manner that will protect the reputation of the club and the federation.
11. Members should remember that the club president is the official hostess of the club and take the time to introduce their guests to her personally during social time.
12. The GFWC/Iowa Bluebook, GFWC/Iowa Officer manuals, District Director handbook and club yearbook are for use in Federation work and shall not be used for any other purposes by any other group or individual outside the Federation. NOTE: the names and addresses may not be released to anyone outside the Federation unless the individual gives specific permission to do so.
13. At all Federation meetings (including GFWC, GFWC/Iowa, district and club meetings), the audience rises in greeting when the GFWC President is introduced.

14. At all Federation meetings within the state (including district and club meetings), the audience rises in greeting when the State President is introduced.

When You Are the Guest

Reply to an invitation immediately. RSVP means to respond whether or not you can attend. RSVP - Regrets Only means that you respond only if you cannot attend; otherwise, the hostess assumes you are attending.

- When a last-minute emergency keeps you from attending, a brief telephone call of explanation and then a note of apology is a proper follow-up.
- Never attend after sending your regrets, unless the hostess has expressed her desire for you to do so if circumstances change at the last minute. Then do so, only after notifying her.
- Only names listed on the invitation are invited. Never assume this gives you the license to include children, relatives or spouses. If the hostess wishes to include them, she will do so.
- If you respond as required, there will not be any surprises or unexpected expense.
- Ask for clarification or additional details if in doubt, never guess. When invited to club functions where a meal is offered be sure to ask if you are responsible for the cost. Usually, a written invitation will give this information; however, verbal invitations are not always clear.
- Be prepared with a short message or greeting. You may be called upon unexpectedly.
- Never appear overdressed if you are a speaker. Be sure to ask about the attire.
- Sent shortly after the affair, a brief thank you note on your personal noted paper or card for that purpose, is very much appreciated by the hostess. It lets her know you appreciated her efforts. Often at a function in the home of the hostess, a nice touch is to bring a small "hostess gift" such as dinner mints, a special wine, or small token specifically for her.

Courtesies to Visiting Officers

Invitations

- Send as early as possible
- Include the following information in the invitation:
 - Time, place, and type of meeting (regular, board, dinner, etc)
 - Type of dress, attire
 - If a speech is to be given, the time allotted for the presentation.
- If you are asking someone to conduct an installation, give complete details. Include the names and titles of the officers to be installed, along with a brief job description for each. If a theme is being used, mention it also. Ask if there are any arrangements the installing officer will require, such as a podium or table.
- Federation officers do not require a fee; however, it is suggested that they be reimbursed for travel.
- Send a reminder finalizing travel arrangements, the name of the hostess, and a restatement of the guest's involvement during the program.

Arrival

- Be sure someone is assigned to meet her.
- If arriving by plane, try to send two people so that one can stay with the car while the other waits in the terminal. The greeter should carry a predetermined sign to make it easy to make contact.

Hotel

- If the officer is staying overnight, the hostess should check the officer's room to be sure it is ready before she arrives. Courtesies such as drinks, or light snacks are most welcome. Depending on the reason the officer is staying overnight, the hostess club should cover the expense of the room.
- Be certain to arrange for transportation to and from the meeting if necessary.

The Meeting

- The officer should be given a copy of the program and/or agenda.
- If there is time before the meeting, introduce her to some of the officers and other members.
- Escort the guest to her seat and see that she is well taken care of at the meeting. Guests are either seated at the head table or in the

first row — usually at the head table if they are to participate in the program.

- Never allow guests to stand in line for refreshments. Serve them or place them at the head of the line.
- Remember that the guest might also be interested in club projects.
- Do not cut out all business, but do offer an opportunity for your speaker to slip out gracefully if he/she desires.
- Regardless of guests' titles or backgrounds, they are quite human. Do not be afraid to ask them questions.
- If a state president or other officer at any top level in the organization is a guest the club, it is courtesy to also invite other district officers as well.
- If a top official is asked to be a keynote speaker at a meeting or event, no other program, except perhaps a very short musical one, should be planned.
- If necessary, transportation should be arranged for the guest's departure.
- Do not forget that the "thank you note" should be written as soon as possible after the visit.

Courtesies to Speakers

In the first letter or email you write to a speaker:

- Tell the speaker what kind of club yours is, how large it is, the subject on which you want him/her to speak, and for how long.
- Tell the speaker where and at what time she will appear on the program and that you will/will not want to have a question and answer period following the presentation.
- Tell the speaker where the meeting is to be held and give directions on how to reach the place or where you will meet her.
- Ask about the fee if you do not know it. IF you understand there is to be no fee, be sure to mention that fact in the first letter so there will be no misunderstanding or embarrassment.
- Ask the speaker to let you know if the arrangements are satisfactory and the exact time of his/her arrival.
- Determine if there is any special equipment needed for the presentation. Make arrangements for the equipment to be available; do not forget extension cords, plug adapters, etc. If you cannot provide the requested equipment, let the speaker know as soon as possible.

- Ask the speaker for a brief biographical sketch for the introduction and a matte or glossy print of her picture for your publicity chairmen if needed.
- Write the speaker about 10 days prior to the date of the meeting to confirm the previous arrangements.
- Be sure to have someone greet the speaker when she arrives. Ask if she would like to freshen up before going to the platform. Take her to meet the President, then usher her to the place she is to sit before the meeting. Stay with the speaker. If time permits, introduce her to the other club members.
- On the platform, provide a podium or lectern, microphone, and a pitcher/glass of water.
- Do not keep the speaker waiting. Begin your meeting on time and make preliminary business as brief as possible.
- After the speaker is done, thank her briefly for the talk. Do or say nothing at the end which will destroy the climax of the talk.
- It is courtesy to present the speaker with a gift of appreciation at the conclusion of her remarks. Sometimes clubs make donations to the speaker's favorite charity in lieu of a gift. If this is the case, ascertain the name of the charity in advance of the presentation and announce the donation and charity when thanking the speaker following the presentation. Be certain that the donation is made promptly and include the name and address of the speaker in the letter to the charity. Send a copy of the letter that accompanies the donation to the speaker with your note of thanks.
- If there are refreshments, see that the speaker is served first.
- See that the speaker reaches her car, hotel, or other destination after the meeting.
- When you have asked a speaker to come and address your club, do not impose upon her. Do not ask the speaker to make broadcast or television appearances or address other groups unless you have cleared such matters in advance.
- If the speaker arrives the day before in order to be on time for the meeting, do not think you have to fill every minute with social arrangements. The speaker will probably welcome being left alone to rest and will give you a better address as a result.
- Be sure to fulfill your financial agreement with the speaker before she leaves.
- Write the speaker a note thanking her for addressing your club.

- Similar courtesies apply to musicians. A concert, a pianist or an instrumentalist is due courteous attention during a performance.

Introduction of a Speaker

- A person known to the audience is presented, and a stranger is introduced.
- The purpose of an introduction is to acquaint the audience with a speaker, as to her background, qualifications, and subject.
- It should be brief, not more than one minute. Do not give the speaker's speech for her.
- It should include the reason for the talk at this time.
- Be factual — not gushy. Put both the speaker and audience at ease.
- Mention the speaker's name at the end.

PLANNING LUNCHEON OR DINNER MEETINGS

- Choose a simple menu, one that will appeal to the majority of the group.
- If a luncheon and banquet are held on the same day, it is wise to have a light lunch.
- Plan your menu with the needs and preferences of your members in mind. Always be aware of the time needed to serve and clear, and schedule amply for this in your agenda.
- Head table guests should always be served first and attention should be paid to seeing that they have everything they need.
- The President should recognize and thank the Chairmen and her committee, keeping remarks brief.

COURTESIES AT THE REGULAR MEETINGS

- When refreshments are served at a meeting, the Chairman should see that the club President and guests are served immediately.
- Punctuality is important. All members should be seated when the President is ready to call the meeting to order.
- Past Presidents should be invited to participate in a program when possible, (invocation, blessing, etc.)

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Newspaper Interviews/Photos

- Try to schedule these about 15-20 minutes prior to the meeting. Make sure your guests have been notified.
- Courtesy should be shown to members of the Press at all times.
- Extend invitations to luncheons, special programs, etc. and if possible provide complimentary tickets.

Members Serving in GFWC or State Positions

- Assist them with expenses if your club treasury allows.
- Offer to do typing, copying, etc. for them
- Be proud of them, give recognition at meetings, and allow them to speak. Take advantage of their knowledge to assist you. Remember, they bring honor to your club.

Press Coverage

It is customary to send to the District Director, District Vice Director, and State President copies of any news articles pertaining to functions attended by them for their respective scrapbooks. If duplicate photos are available, sending them is also a much-appreciated courtesy.

Flag Etiquette

When used on a speaker's platform, the position of the flag of the United States of America depends on how it is displayed. When displayed flat, it should be positioned above and behind the speaker. When Displayed from a staff, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in the position of honor at the right of the speaker (presiding officer) as she faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be on her left (to the right of the audience).

During the rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag, with the right hand over the heart. When the flag is not displayed, those present should face the music and act in the same manner as they would if the flag were displayed there.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag on the United States of America should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag, with both hands empty, and the right hand over the heart.

In a ceremony including songs and the Flag salute, the National Anthem is first, the flag salute, then the patriotic song.

Correspondence

- Business letters should be typed on official club stationery and in good businesslike form. If emails are sent in lieu of letters, all efforts should be made to include appropriate titles and contact information.
- Casual notes and invitations should be written on small, informal club stationery or note cards. The tone of the note should be informal.
- Letters to public officials should be typed on club stationery and care is taken to use the appropriate title.
- Correspondence should be answered immediately. The Corresponding Secretary should supply the President with a copy.

IN CLOSING

It may seem truly overwhelming to grasp all the fine points of protocol and courses. However, don't ever let that discourage you or your club from having Federation guests. The most important thing is our connection and contact with one another, and no club should feel too intimidated to pursue that relationship with the Federation.

Perhaps the most important things to remember are to plan well in advance, make a checklist for last-minute details, and then relax! Entertaining other members of the federation does involve some work, but it truly is a wonderful way to involve your club and its members and provide an opportunity to broaden your horizons. Each interaction with our fellow members is a chance to learn and grow, and nothing is more important.