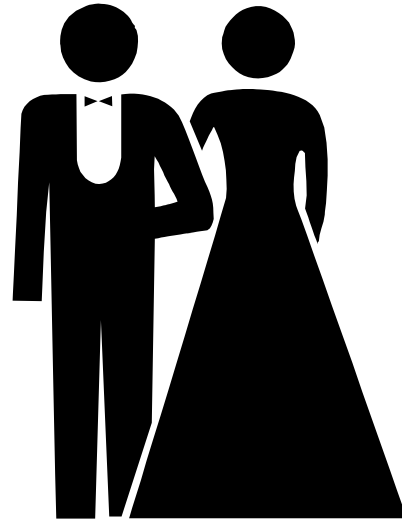


Protocol

Many times during the military member's career you will be invited to attend all sorts of ceremonies, from promotions and changes of command, to formal dinners and retirement functions. Knowing a little about protocol can make you feel more comfortable and confident. To quote from the Protocol Primer, "Protocol is an adherence to customs, tempered with a touch of common sense, good manners, and a concern for others". As an Air Force spouse, it is important to know the protocol of the military world, which is a combination of tradition, etiquette, and courtesy.



Spouse dress code

The invitation will usually indicate the type of attire. When in doubt, call the host of the event and ask what the appropriate dress will be. What the military member is required to wear to an event can also be a good indication what sort of civilian clothing would be appropriate.

Very Casual:

- Corresponds with type of function (barbecue, hayride, sporting event, etc.). Usually jeans or shorts, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.
- For very casual events, the military member would probably also be wearing civilian clothing.

Casual:

- The casual civilian dress at military official functions is typically what would ordinarily be worn to work on a day-to-day basis. For civilian guests from outside the military community, appropriate attire could range from slacks and open neck shirt to business suit.
- At civilian casual functions, dress for men will normally be a short or long-sleeved open-neck shirt, perhaps a sweater or sports coat, but not tie. For ladies, any casual dress, slacks, pants suit, blouses, and long or short skirts are appropriate.
- Military members would wear the "duty uniform", usually either BDU's, the light blue shirt with or without tie, or flight suit, depending on the duty section.

Sport Coat and Tie:

- This is the next stage up the ladder towards more formal attire and would be appropriate for some icebreakers or dinner at the commander's quarters. For men, this means a sports jacket or blazer with color-coordinated slacks and tie. Women have the option of wearing an appropriate dress or a dressy slacks outfit.
- When the invitation specifies "sport coat and tie" the military member would usually be expected to wear civilian clothing, also.

Business Suit/Informal:

- This form of dress most closely equates to "informal," and for men, should be a dark (subdued) suit with a tie. It can include three-piece suits as well. Women should wear business suit, or a dressy, street-length or "Sunday" dress.
- The military counterpart to "business suit" is Service Dress uniform. The types of military functions where the Service Dress uniform is appropriate include ceremonies, parades, reviews, retirements, official visits of civilian dignitaries, changes of command, and afternoon receptions.

Formal:

- Also known as "black tie". For the active duty member, this is the Mess Dress or Semi-formal uniform and is appropriate attire for functions like dinings-out, some commander's holiday/New Year's receptions, and military weddings (if you're one of the participants), and various civilian "black tie" affairs like charity or holiday balls.
- The civilian equivalent to the Mess Dress uniform is a dinner jacket or black tuxedo with black bow tie. Appropriate attire for the ladies would be long or short evening dress.

Types of Ceremonies and Events

There are a variety of Air Force ceremonies and events. If the invitation has an RSVP or "Please respond", you should reply within two days of receiving the invitation, or by the "respond by" date if one is indicated. Do not assume that your children are invited to a function unless specifically indicated. At "public" events, such as unit barbecues, etc., children should be well behaved. The following is a brief description of the most common ceremonies.

Awards and Decorations

The Air Force presents many levels of awards in recognition of service or achievement. The commander's timely presentation of the appropriate decoration at a "public" ceremony greatly enhances the value of the award to the recipient and is a plus for the entire unit.

Award/Decoration ceremonies range from formal reviews to presentation at commander's call to much smaller informal office ceremonies, depending largely on the recipient's desires. The basic elements of this ceremony include the reading of the official orders and the presentation of the award or decoration. Dress for these occasions ranges from casual to business suit/informal.

Receiving Lines

The word reception means the act of receiving or greeting. A receiving line is a practical and efficient way to accomplish this greeting. In the Air Force, receiving lines are frequently used to greet a new commander and spouse after his or her change of command ceremony, at commander's receptions honoring local civic leaders, or at traditional holiday receptions.

Receiving lines are preceded by an announcer, whose responsibility it is to announce or introduce guests to the host. Normally, the commander's aide or protocol officer acts in this capacity. The announcer stands just to the side of the host and introduces the next guests in line.

- No eating, drinking, or smoking in the receiving line (there will be a small table before you get to the reception area to put your food or drinks on).

- When going through the line, do not shake hands with the announcer. Give him/her your rank and last name, i.e., Major and Mrs. Smith, official title (Mayor and Mrs. Tom Jones), or Mr. and Mrs. Brown. Always provide your name even though you know the announcer. Memories fail at times.
- A gentleman precedes his lady through the line at *official* functions, ladies first at all others.
- Never engage in extended conversation in a receiving line—you'll add to the congestion for those in the line behind you. Do not hesitate to repeat your name to members of the receiving line.
- Since receptions by nature are usually formal, the formal attire described above is usually appropriate.

Dinings-In and Dinings-Out

Formal military dinners are a tradition in all branches of the United States Armed services. The dining-in and dining-out represent the most formal aspects of Air Force social life. A dining-in or dining-out is designed so that members of an organization can have a good time together as a unit. Very formal and serious ceremonies are included in the dining-in and dining-out, but various forms of skits or entertainment are also be included to add merriment to the evening. There are “rules of the mess”, which are usually printed on the program. The rules are designed to conform to tradition and promote levity. Violators of these rules are subject to the wrath and mischievousness of Mister/Madam Vice President of the Mess. Assigned “penalties” are humorous, and are carried out with all assembled watching.

- The dining-*in* is a formal dinner for the members of a wing, unit, or other organization. The "combat dining-in" is far less formal because of the dress requirements and more informal atmosphere. The dining-in is usually reserved for military members only; however, civilians are sometimes included when they are working members of the unit.
- The dining-*out* includes spouses and guests.
- Officers wear the mess dress uniform. Male civilians should wear appropriate black tie dinner dress. The proper dress for civilians should be clearly stated in the invitation. Retired officers may wear the mess dress or civilian attire. For enlisted members, mess dress or the semi-formal dress uniform is worn.
- Long dinner dresses or evening clothes for female guests are appropriate when attending a dining-out.
- Pregnant military women may wear appropriate civilian attire.

Promotions

Promotion ceremonies can be as simple as reading the order and pinning of the insignia and as complicated as having multiple activities occurring (presentation of certificate of promotion; presentation of a General Officer's flag; presentation of General Officer uniform items to include belt, weapon, etc.) Sometimes the promotee's spouse is invited to help “pin on” the new rank insignia. As in Award and Decoration ceremonies, dress for a promotion ceremony can range from casual to business suit/informal.

Change of Command

The change of command ceremony is a clear, legal, and symbolic passing of authority and responsibility from one commander to the next. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the new commander will most likely host a reception immediately afterward, which may include a

receiving line. By tradition, the relieved commander seldom attends the new commander's reception. Dress for a change of command is usually business suit/informal, but may also be casual.

Retirement

Recognition of members who are retiring from a career of long, faithful, and honorable service is one of the oldest traditions of military service. Each retiree should leave the service with a tangible expression of appreciation for his/her contribution to the Air Force, and with the assurance that they will continue to be a member of the Air Force family in retirement. The retiree's spouse is honored in the ceremony as well. The retiree's children may also be invited to attend the ceremony, but younger children will require supervision because the retiree's spouse will be included in the ceremony. Guest's children are not invited to this formal event. Attire is business suit/informal.

Other events

You may be invited to a variety of other events and gatherings, such as teas, coffees, Reveille and Retreat, activation and inactivation of units, and ribbon cutting ceremonies. If you are stationed at a base that also has Army or Navy personnel, you may be invited to events specific to those services. If you have any questions about these events, don't hesitate to contact the host or hosting unit.

