

# GUIDE TO PROTOCOL



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## Introduction

If you have ever planned a major VFW event, you know the importance of getting all the details in place. Please consider the information contained here first when planning VFW events such as luncheons, banquets or other social functions. There is a great deal to take into consideration when coordinating activities and this guide to protocol will help you every step of the way.

At all levels, protocol is critical to insure that proper relation between VFW officials and the public are conducted with maximum efficiency and without embarrassment to the organization.

*Keep in mind that the information contained here should not be considered as complete.*

## Maintaining an Order of Precedence



One of the cardinal rules of protocol is to observe an order of precedence at VFW functions where officials and their representatives are present. This is important when making seating arrangements or organizing receiving lines.

The order of precedence for dignitaries at all levels (National, Department, District, County Council and Post) is as follows: Commander, Sr. Vice Commander, Jr. Vice Commander, Judge Advocate, Surgeon, Chaplain and Council of Administration.

Should a VFW function include a receiving line, the first person in line should be the program chairman, who introduces each individual coming through the receiving line to the host Commander, or Auxiliary President. The Commander or President, in turn, introduces each person to the guest of honor, who is next in line, with other guests following in their proper order of rank.

A receiving line should have no more than eight people and should be located away from the door by which people enter and leave the room.

Participants in a receiving line or those going through a receiving line should neither smoke nor carry food or beverages.

If the receiving line is held in a room that has a marble, tile or highly polished wood floor, it would be helpful to those people standing in the receiving line to provide a carpet runner on which they can stand.

It also is suggested that you provide chairs or a sofa immediately adjacent to or behind the receiving line for occasional rest periods for the members.

Some functions will require special seating arrangements. To this end, please review the suggested seating arrangements for different types of programs and dinners and choose the one right for you.

### **Making Proper Introductions**



At some point during your event, you will need to formally introduce your guests of honor to the attendees.

As a means of expediting the program, guests who are not seated at the head table can be introduced during the dinner, before the head table is introduced. As another means of saving time, you can introduce people by groups rather than individually (i.e., committee members, officers, past commanders, etc.).

A standard procedure for introducing head table guests is to start at the extreme left end of the head table and introduce each guest by name and title, moving to the next guest and performing the same mission until you have introduced all of the guests to the left of the podium.

Remember there is no need to introduce guests who will be called on to speak or receive an award later in the program. You also can save time by asking the audience to hold their applause until all

of the guests have been introduced and then give them proper recognition at that time.

After you have introduced all of the guests to your left move to the opposite end of the head table and introduce each guest by name and title moving from the farthest guest toward the center of the table, again skipping the introduction of those who will be called on to speak or accept an award later in the program.

In the case of a two-tiered head table, you should introduce the guests who are seated at the lower or secondary head table before you introduce the guests at the top or primary head table.

The event “toastmaster” should be brief, laudatory and to-the-point when introducing a speaker. Introductions should be carefully planned and practiced in advance. The manner in which a speaker is introduced is very important.

The introduction should be approached in the same manner in which you would introduce a friend to a person you know by making them feel comfortable, at ease and known to each other.

Something to keep in mind is that the more important and well-known a speaker is, the shorter an introduction is required.

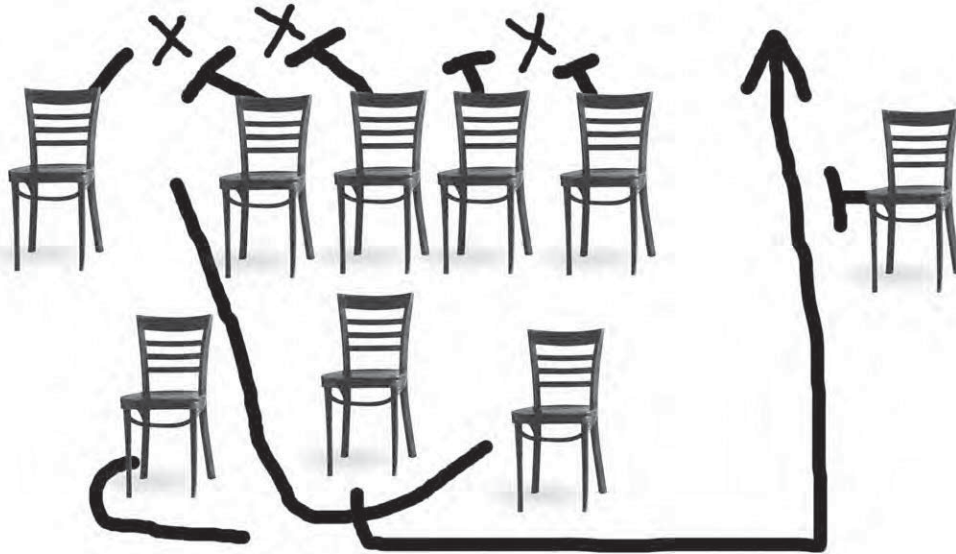
Please remember: There is no excuse for mispronouncing the names and titles of your guests.

Generally speaking, the main speaker should be introduced last. Occasionally, this conventional arrangement should be changed if there are several speakers on the program or numerous awards are to be presented at the event.

If the program does not have a keynote speaker, the guests who are called on to speak should be introduced from the lowest rank to that of the highest official present.

Plan the order of your program early. Discuss it with the people who are involved and remain flexible to changing the program to meet special needs.

## Planning the Program



The following are a few suggested hints that may help you in planning your program:

1. Extend written invitations as early as possible to those you wish to invite to a particular program, advising them of the time, date, place, attire and what is expected of them (i.e., principal speaker, greetings, brief remarks, attendance, time allotted, etc.). Be sure to include information as to whether the invitation includes their spouse or other members of the family.
2. Follow up with those speaking at your program with a phone call to make sure they received the invitation. Ask for the number of those who will attend, and get their names.
3. Check back with each speaker a week to 10 days prior to the scheduled event to be sure their plans have not changed and that their guests will be present.
4. Be sure to include the spouses of guests you invite in your seating arrangements for the dinner and program.
5. Remember to give dinner tickets to the speakers and other guests of honor before the event.
6. Assign a host and/or hostess (officers, members, committee, etc.) to each guest you invite to see that your guests are properly met, escorted and introduced to other people. Your guests will appreciate your consideration.
7. Be sure to use name cards and seat your guests at reserved tables near the front so they will not have to fend for themselves in obtaining seats.
8. Notify the media several weeks ahead of your scheduled program. Follow up with a telephone call a few days prior to the event, reminding them of the occasion. Arrange for a photographer (commercial, Post member, etc.) to take pictures of the event.

## What To Do When The Chief Visits



It is a very important occasion when the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars visits a Post. The Chief is the spokesman for some 1.3 million veterans who served their country during a time of war. Anyone dealing with the Chief's visit has important responsibilities. We suggest that these individuals be familiar with the following guidelines to make their job a little easier and the Chief's visit run as smooth as possible:

1. Contact your local radio and TV stations as soon as you have the Chief's definite arrival time. Talk shows are sometimes planned well in advance. Public Service time is free, and an interview with the Commander-in-Chief and a local VFW leader might be arranged. It is important that the scheduling does not conflict with other engagements the Chief might have.
2. Arrange a press conference for the Chief. It is usually more convenient to have it in the hotel where the Chief will be staying. A notice of the press conference to all media – newspapers, TV and radio – should be sent at least three days before the event. On the morning of the press conference, call to remind the media of the time and place of the press conference.
3. It is important to remember that the media who attend the press conference are there to interview a national leader of a major veteran's organization, not local VFW members. For that reason, it is important that Post members do not volunteer information. The best arrangement is to leave the Chief alone with the media.
4. Introduce the Commander-in-Chief to the local leaders in your community and invite them to a dinner or event at which the Chief will speak.
5. Once an itinerary has been established, follow it precisely. Make sure the Chief gets to his appointments on time. If a dinner where the Chief is to speak starts at 7 p.m., have everyone seated and start serving the meal exactly at 7 p.m.
6. Ask the Commander-in-Chief if they would like to see the local points of interest or if they have a friend in the community whom they wish to visit. Do your best to accommodate the Chief's requests. Be sure there is a good car available for the Chief at all times, to meet them at their point of arrival, to take them to their point of departure and to take them from place to place in your community. The person who will drive the car must be one who can be relied on for punctuality, courtesy and safe driving.
7. If the Commander-in-Chief is to speak where there is a bar, close the bar a half-hour before the Chief is scheduled to speak and during their talk.
8. Limit receptions before banquets and other events to one hour.
9. Do not plan unrelated activities, such as baseball games or private parties, without first consulting the Commander-in-Chief.

