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Pop Quiz: Will You Survive Your Office Party?

By [Janene Mascarella](#)
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Though the holiday season is supposed to be holly and jolly, the holiday party might feel like the right time to hide under your desk, or head straight for the eggnog. It's not quite like letting loose with your friends and family, because after a few cocktails, the corporate lines can get as fuzzy as Santa's beard.



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Your red pumps lead to an awkward political conversation with your CEO. What do you do?

That's what "Lisa," a communications manager in Santa Rosa, California, found out last year. At her office holiday party, Lisa's CEO pointed to her festive patent-leather red pumps and screamed, "How could you wear those? What—do you support Sarah Palin?!" But the boss wasn't finished. When she lent a co-worker gold Chanel nail polish, he shouted, "I don't pay you enough for you to afford Chanel!"

But there's no need to cower in your cubicle. Do you have the schmoozing skills to party hearty with your colleagues—and your boss? Take this quiz and find out.

1. Your best office bud has the flu and won't be making it to the party. You

- a. hang at home in your Snuggie—you'll never survive the party without your partner-in-crime.
- b. go it alone without your safety blanket, and do your best to work the crowd.
- c. hide in the coat-check all night. (Faux fur really *is* in this year.)

Answer: b. Sure, you can be a social butterfly. You just need prep work and a pep talk. Before the party, imagine connecting with co-workers, and make it your mission to leave them feeling uplifted. "This mindset will help you radiate energy of friendliness that draws people to you," says Jill Spiegel, author of *How To Talk To Anyone About Anything*. Give everyone at the party equal attention, from your boss to the administrative assistant: You'll create an aura showcasing your leadership skills and creating respect.

2. So you made it to the party. Your idea of partying is

- a. talking about work. (So what else is new.)
- b. practicing your standup routine with a captive audience: the VP's wife.
- c. mingling like a pro.

Answer: c. Get ready to chat it up with whomever comes your way—about anything but work. "Follow the lead of Eleanor Roosevelt, and go with the 'a, b, c method,'" says Melissa Leonard, a Manhattan-based expert on business etiquette and protocol. "Think to yourself, 'a—animals,' and tell an animal-related story: *I'm thinking of getting a dog for the kids—do you have any pets?* 'B—baseball': *Which team is your favorite?* And so on."

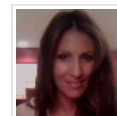
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Janene Mascarella has written about parenting and family life for such publications and organizations as *The Washington Post*, CNNMoney, *American Way*, *Self*, *Glamour*, *Cooking Light*, *Women's Health*, *Woman's Day*, *BabyTalk*, *Parenting*, *Parents*, *Family Circle*, *American Baby*, AOL, and iVillage. Follow her on Twitter at [MrsWrite](#).

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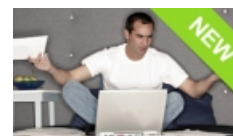
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And keep an answer ready for the stand-by icebreaker: "What's new?" Tell them what's new: a great article or book you just read, or a new walking trail you just found. "People love to feel inspired," Spiegel says, "and they like to be around people who enjoy the simple pleasures in life."

3. It's open bar—woo-hoo! The sky's the limit—and the hangovers are courtesy of the head honcho. True or false?

Answer: *False.* The holiday party is not the time to imbibe freely. "Open bar" doesn't mean "open your mouth and guzzle." No one wants to be that person whose infamous holiday-party performance becomes legend. If you don't trust yourself, stick to one drink.

4. You asked about the dress code...right?

- a. Right. Remember when that dude in marketing wore ripped jeans last year? I sure miss working with him.
- b. Right. I'd rather be caught accidentally hitting "reply all" than show up overdressed.
- c. Both of the above.

Answer: c. Don't fall victim to a wardrobe malfunction. Check out the dress code prior to the party to avoid embarrassment at all costs. Pity the poor employee who shows up in the sexy Santa costume while the scandalized board of directors whispers disapprovingly. Your time as colleagues might be coming to an end.

5. It's the day after the party. What's the first thing you should do?

- a. Thank the party planner.
- b. Post a video on Facebook of your supervisor doing the Electric Slide.
- c. Is this a trick question?

Answer: a. Being gracious will leave a lasting impression. Take a tip from Diane Gottsman, a nationally recognized etiquette expert: Send a thank-you note to your boss and/or your office manager/party planner—even if you thought the party was a drag. You're showing respect and responsibility—and it's just the right thing to do, considering someone spent a great deal of time and money planning the event.

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