

How to Say "Goodbye" in Any Situation

Learn the best way to wrap up a first date, in-law visit, work meeting and more

By [Amanda Greene](#) Posted May 20, 2011 from [WomansDay.com](#)

Au revoir, adios, see ya—there are plenty of ways to say goodbye, but it's not always easy to know the right way to bid farewell to certain situations. It's especially tricky when faced with things like a bad date, in-law visit or a party where you're making new acquaintances. To help navigate the tricky waters of social mores, we turned to etiquette experts for their tactful how-to exit strategies. Read on to learn a few rules that will ensure you always make a gracious departure.

Dinner with a Friend

First things first: If you're exhausted or in a bad mood, it's best to pass on the dinner date. "It's your responsibility to contribute socially, even to a one-on-one dinner," says K. Cooper Ray, founder of manners and style blog [SocialPrimer.com](#). That said, if you've had a leisurely dinner and are tired—or have somewhere else to go—it's best to tell your friend the truth. "This is when you can be the most real," Ray says. "I always think that honesty is the best policy when it comes to situations with good friends." However, Ray advises against pulling out your wallet as a signal that it's time to pay the check. There should be a mutual exchange during which you both agree to end the meal. An ideal moment is when the waiter asks if you'd like dessert or another drink. *Photo: Marc Oeder / Getty Images*



Work Meeting

"The biggest mistake is to not have an agenda," says etiquette and protocol expert [Dorothea Johnson](#), founder of [The Protocol School of Washington](#). She happily recalls a colleague's style of running meetings: "He would say, 'This meeting starts at 4 o'clock and ends at 5. You're welcome to stay and enjoy the food afterward, but the meeting is officially over at 5.' I practically fell in love with the man." Johnson notes that if you are in charge of the meeting, it is your responsibility to maintain control, which includes taking a firm lead when it comes to wrapping things up in a timely manner. "Before adjourning, I always ask if anyone has anything else pertinent to the conversation to add, and make sure they're clear on any next steps that need to be taken," says Ray. "And then I thank the group for a productive meeting." *Photo: Comstock Images*



New Acquaintance at a Social Event

Ray, who admits to being a social butterfly when it comes to cocktail parties—"if you put a GPS tracker on me, the trail would look like an insect flying around the room"—is well-versed in how to chat someone up and then elegantly say goodbye. "You've got to become adept at reading people's demeanors if you're going to be socially successful," he says. "Are they fidgeting? Are their eyes glazed over? If they're looking over your shoulder, that's the biggest cue to me that they are ready to move on." He suggests following a script such as this: "It was really good to meet and I hope to see you

again very soon.” Before you leave, it doesn’t hurt to mention that you’re going to get a drink and offer to get them one, too. *Photo: Thomas Jackson / Getty Images*



Chatty Coworker

It’s nice to take a break and chat with friends at work, but it can be stressful when you’re ready to get back to your to-do list and they’re still recounting events from the weekend. “I tell my coworker, ‘I’m so happy we got to catch up, but I’d better get back to work or else I’ll be here until midnight,’” says **Patricia Rossi**, etiquette and protocol coach and author of *Everyday Etiquette*. By blaming your looming pile of assignments, you won’t hurt your colleague’s feelings. Plus, you can both commiserate over how much you need to get done. If you’re worried that your worker-bee ways are putting you at risk of severing a friendship, suggest continuing the conversation over coffee or lunch at a later date, recommends Rossi. *Photo: Clerkenwell / Getty Images*



Heart-to-Heart with a Friend

“This is the price we pay for friendship,” says Ray. “No matter how draining it is to listen to a friend talk about a breakup over and over again, that’s the investment. As a friend, you have to be there in the tough times.” In other words: Grin and bear it. If you truly have somewhere else you have to be, explain your plans to your friend and arrange to reconnect when you’re free again. “Don’t ever leave them with the impression that you’re not there for them,” he says. Rossi recommends ending the emotion-filled session by reminding your friend about something you love about her: her laugh, her cooking skills—whatever it is that makes her shine. *Photo: Clerkenwell / Getty Images*



Bad First Date

If you’re on an awkward setup or dreadful first date, you owe it to your partner to stick around until the meal (or coffee or movie) is over. Beyond that, you shouldn’t feel any obligation to stay. According to Ray, when it comes to traditional

etiquette rules, it's the woman's duty to signal when she's ready to leave. So don't be shy about saying something, like mentioning that you have an early meeting the next day. And though a quick hug or kiss on the cheek is a fairly harmless send-off, Ray admits that he doesn't like assumed intimacy—nothing beyond a handshake is ever required. *Photo: Ashley Jouhar / Getty Images*



Run-In with an Ex

“Take the high road,” says Johnson. “The low road is so crowded.” Her favorite piece of advice is to always be cordial and say hello, but keep walking. You don't owe an ex anything other than a friendly hello. No matter how things ended between the two of you, you shouldn't feel obligated to have a lengthy conversation. Keep things short so that you won't have to make a big deal of saying goodbye. *Photo: Jupiterimages*



Visit with Your In-Laws

According to Ray, this is when “you're really at the mercy of your partner.” That's why it's best to create a plan with your spouse before the visit. For example, agree that you'll stay for just one drink after dinner and be out the door at 10 p.m. “You can't be the one who pipes up at dinner [wanting] to leave and acting as though you're not absolutely thrilled to be there,” he says. When your agreed-upon departure time does arrive, Rossi suggests giving them a hug and kiss if that's the norm, as well as thanking them for the activity you shared—the lovely dinner, wonderful concert or whatever you've just experienced together. *Photo: PhotoAlto/Eric Audras / Getty Images*

