

TIPS FOR CONSORTS FROM CONSORTS

Other Consorts like you have reflected on their year and made some suggestions that you might find useful which we have gathered together as Tips. These are merely helpful ideas to get you ready for almost anything. Some may be perfect for you, some may not, so just pick and choose.

If you have any tips to share with others, then please send them to:

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ANTICIPATE, PLAN, EXPERIMENT

ATTITUDE REALLY IS EVERYTHING!!

There once was a woman who woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and noticed she had only three hairs on her head. "Well," she said, "I think I'll braid my hair today." So she did and she had a wonderful day.



The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror, and saw that she had only two hairs on her head. "Hmmm," she said, "I think I'll part my hair down the middle today." So she did and she had a grand day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that she had only one hair on her head. "Well," she said, "today I'm going to wear my hair in a pony tail."

So she did and she had a fun, fun day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror, and noticed that there wasn't a single hair on her head "YEA!" she exclaimed, "I don't have to fix my hair today!"

GETTING THE CONVERSATION GOING

When meeting people, they will often be wearing a Company jewel or badge and it is a good icebreaker to ask them about it. This can lead to asking about their Company, when their year started, what they have organised for their year and about their charitable endeavours. Ask what they do; ask if they have holiday plans; what interests/ hobbies they have, what sports they follow, their holidays and family and so on and so on. If you feel

asking too many question starts to sound weird, comment on the room, the dinner as a starting point. You could even start with “Tell me about you”. Be prepared to know about your own Livery Company in case they ask YOU about it!

PROJECTING WARMTH, CONFIDENCE, AND ‘BON HOMIE’

To “feel” ready, wear what makes you feel good and confident. Stand tall. Smile, as you welcome people. Think warm lovely thoughts as you enter the event. You will project that feeling to others and they too will feel good and confident. Remember that how you feel is contagious. Shake someone’s hand firmly and with warmth. Say something like “Lovely to see you” if you want them to feel welcome and break away by saying, “Do enjoy your evening”.

PREPARING AHEAD FOR CONVERSATION

When hosting guests or speakers or attending a specific event do some background research on the people you will be meeting or sitting next to at top table. It gives you a starting point for conversation. If you are meeting a member of the Royal Family find out what they have been doing that day or in the week, so you have a starter for the conversation. Ask your Clerk too if they have any information that might make you better informed, and of course the internet can provide a wealth of information. (See really useful resources on the City Consorts website). Quite often Clerks send through short CV’s of their Master attending an event at a company different from theirs. Maybe you could ask the Master or the Clerk if they received any. Contacts through City Consorts might be able to help as well.

BUSINESS CARDS ARE REALLY USEFUL

Business cards are handy for a number of reasons. They are a great way to introduce yourself and be remembered. By exchanging cards, you have a reminder of you who you met. They give you a way to send an email or ring someone you want to stay connected with – for whatever reason. Remember you will be meeting a great number of interesting people.

The printing of your card is likely to involve your Livery Company, especially if you choose to put the logo of your Company on the card, as most do. Printing cards for the Master is often done so you may be able to simply become part of that process. A good starting point is to talk to The Master.

One of the most helpful features of a business card in recent years has been the addition of a photo on the back of the card. Another equally helpful detail is adding the year you’re in office as Consort. This will allow you to continue to use the cards after the end of your term in office, say as you continue to meet more City Consort members as a Past Consort.

You decide how much personal information you want to put on your card. Usually Consorts wanted to exchange email addresses, phone numbers and mailing addresses. Initially mailing addresses seemed unnecessary on the business card until friendships grew, and names were added to each others' Christmas card list. Have a look at different styles of card to give you an idea of how you would like yours to look.

Not every Company pays for the cards so you might have to organise these yourself. There are a number of providers around and City Consorts can make some suggestions.

THE RECEIVING LINE – MAKING IT WORK WELL

To keep a receiving line moving it can be helpful to say, “Have you met X?” where X is the person who just went through the line ahead of them. Or if you are greeting those at the end of the line, suggest they can at last go to get a drink. Try not to chat too much, as it slows things down. A simple “do have a wonderful time” is a good closing statement to encourage people to move on.

If you are organising the reception, it helps if you make sure the staff with the drinks are close enough to be seen easily, yet far enough away that a bottleneck does not form as people pick up a glass when you are trying to move the next guest on.

If too many handshakes prove difficult then you could ‘cut down’ by kissing people who you know.

Don't wear a ring on your right hand as I found it painful shaking hands after a while.

You can wear long gloves at a formal dinner to save your hands and avoid germs. Most but take them off when they eat.

Have a stash of hand sanitizer available if you have concerns about germs.

COMFY FEET

Comfortable shoes are essential and gel inserts can help. Wedge heels can be a good compromise.

SUPPORTING THE MASTER'S SPEECHES

When the Master is going to make a speech, keep a spare copy for him/her as well as giving one to your Clerk. The Master can also email a copy to themselves so that in a real crisis someone with access to the internet can download it. It is less frequent that Consorts make speeches yet the same would apply.

AVOIDING THE WEIGHT GAIN

Everyone has their own TIP and you probably know what works best for you. Here's mine: if attending a drinks and canapés event, have fresh soup in the fridge for when you get home. I find I am less likely to go for the biscuits! Also, you can often request (ahead of time) fruit for your pudding at a dinner event.

GETTING MORE FROM YOUR NECKLACE.



I have a necklace which is a bit too short for some outfits so I got a chain and threaded it through the unclashed clasp at the two ends, then closed the necklace I had just attached. Lo and Behold I have a longer necklace and it looks good. Of course, you can use different lengths and styles of chain to get even more from your jewellery.



KEEPING UP APPEARANCES – WHAT'S YOUR BAG?

You may wish to have a bag of items on standby which you can leave in the cloakroom. It could include makeup, perfume, spare tights of every colour, black shoes which, at a pinch could go with anything, and a black jacket for emergencies.

A large handbag can be useful for carrying everything one needs but they can be cumbersome and spoil the line of an outfit, plus carrying unnecessary weight is tiring. So, leave the large bag in the cloakroom and have a small bag with the essentials which you take out on arrival. You may be able to find a bag which may be used as a clutch or shoulder bag (detachable strap) and with a detachable wrist strap.

PLANNING YOUR CLOTHES AHEAD OF THE EVENT

Plan ahead in busy weeks. List exactly what you are going to wear including all the accessories.

Male consorts may find they need more dress shirts (black or white tie) than they envisaged, as events seem to get bunched together at certain times of the year.

KEEPING YOUR LIPSTICK FRESH

Do you find your lipstick comes off during the evening? Now I use lip liner to outline my lips, put on a long-lasting 8- hour lipstick, blot it and reapply. It works a treat – basically it stains

the lips. Various brands have a version of a long-lasting lipstick from the cheapest to the most expensive.

BESPOKE CLOTHES

A sharply defined jacket with interesting colour and pattern looks confident so you will feel confident. Some of our members use dressmakers and tailors which you can find on the internet or in local papers. Maybe even in village magazines and notice boards.

PERSONAL STYLING

A number of larger department stores offer a Personal Styling service where you shop with an expert in the store. You have to book, it is generally a free service and useful if you need several outfits and advice. Find details online. You might also find that in your locality there is a personal stylist who will go through your wardrobe with you advising what to keep, what to alter and what to get rid of.

FUN JEWELLERY



Fun can be better than diamonds and pearls. There's lots of costume jewellery out there in shops and stores. Try something different and dress up an outfit with fun jewellery to boost confidence. It can provide a real eye catcher. Look up designer-makers and go to craft and art fairs, as there's lots to find there. Check out if your region has 'Arts Weeks', when artists and designers, including jewellery makers, show



their work in their studios. Somerset, Devon, Oxfordshire, and Dorset are examples of counties which have them. Look up 'county art weeks'. There's another source - the jewellery makers in Art Colleges and Universities sell their wares at their summer degree shows usually held in May/June time. The necklace in the photo on the left-hand-side is an example of a necklace from a designer-maker in Scotland.

HAVING A COLLECTION OF BOLEROS AND SHRUGS

It's always useful to have a range of small cardigans, boleros, shrugs and short jackets to go over a sleeveless day dress to cover your arms if you need to and keep you warm. There are often a number around in the sales and you could build a collection of styles and colours to get more out of your dresses and tops.

WANT TO COVER YOUR ARMS?



Sometimes I want to cover my arms at a dinner function when I am wearing a sleeveless dress, but wearing a stole gets in the way with all the hand shaking. Here's a tip. Take a long scarf, fold it in half so the scarf is now half its length. Then leave a distance of about 15-18 inches from the fold to the end and put a few stitches in, just on one edge, to hold the two sides together. Then put your head through the space/gap you have just created, and the scarf flows over your shoulders. Position it so that it works for you. You could work out where to stitch it by using a pin or safety pin first.

This scarf in the photo was a see-through silk scarf with a satin edge and the dress had a bodice but was sleeveless. The stitched part of the scarf was positioned towards the back.

CONTACTING OTHER CONSORTS

My husband emailed his fellow Masters to ask if they would kindly request permission of their Consorts to provide their email address - and so I was able to contact fellow Consorts directly without needing to clutter up the inbox of the Clerks. You could of course ask your own Master to pass on your details to the Masters of other livery companies so it works both ways.

GETTING NETWORKED EARLY IN YOUR YEAR

I decided to host a Consort event early in my year and in doing so I noticed that my diary began filling with invitations from those I had met at my event.

If you are interested in hosting an event you could talk to other Consorts and/or contact the Events Committee of City Consorts.

IRONBRIDGE – A TIME TO GET TO KNOW CONSORTS IN YOUR YEAR

It seems that most agree that attending Ironbridge and any events leading up to it is really worthwhile to meet other couples in their Master's year. Masters and Consorts each form their own Associations at Ironbridge, defined by their specific name, and these Associations generally organise social activities in the years that follow. The Past Masters and Past Mistresses Associations become a kind of 'network for life'. You might have an opportunity to become one of the organisers of the Association at Ironbridge if you wanted to. (See the section on the City Consorts website to get more information on Ironbridge)

CONSORT EVENTS ORGANISED BY YOU

If you're organising one, it's useful to do a recce beforehand as you will be asked lots of questions, including the basics like: Where is the loo?

If you are hosting a guest, or have a speaker coming to your event, look them up on the internet so you have some information about them. Ask your Clerk if they have any information that might make you better informed too.

You might also find it helpful to contact the Events Committee of City Consorts who might be able to provide some help and ideas in organising an event.

WALKING THE CITY

Doing walks in the City is a great way to understand how everything 'fits together'. Look up on the internet for, for example: London Walks, or Walking in London, London's Hidden Walks, Walking the City of London.

CLUBS FOR THE LIVERY

There are various Clubs you can belong to which can be very rewarding. They include the City Livery Club and Ward Clubs in each of the Wards in the City. Check out which one might suit you. (Also see the reference in the Information section of the City Consorts website under The Livery). It may not be necessary to belong, if your partner is a Member you are likely to be able to use the club and its facilities on the strength of his membership. This can be simply checked by phoning the Clerk or Secretary of the Club or even asking your partner.

THANK YOU'S

The Mayor and Mayoress certainly set the standard on this in my year. Thank you letters were sent the day after the event. When I followed this practice, it soon became obvious that my thank you letter was much more personal as I could recall details worth mentioning."

You may ask "How can I make a sharp impression with my thank you letters?" Your Clerk or Master may likely be able to supply you with letterhead or an electronic template with the Company's logo and personalised with your name, email address and phone number. With an electronic template in your hands, you will be able to print your own sheets of headed paper when needed.

CAPTURING YOUR MEMORIES

The year will pass so quickly, and it might feel like a bit of a whirlwind with little time to reflect. Some of our members have kept records of every event – where, what & who they met. Here's my tip. I have begun keeping a record where I list the events I attend, the location, the people I spoke to, and the outfit I wore. I am also making sure I have a photo. The record will not only help me remember, and perhaps re-live some of the experiences, it will also be useful for passing on to the next Consort.

Such records or journals would also be useful resources for City Consorts.