

Fergie's dinner-party tip: The perfect time to end one chat and start another with someone else is between courses.

# How to Work a Room Like a (Royal) Pro

After 25 years in the public eye, Sarah Ferguson, the exuberant Duchess of York, is a meet-and-greet (and charm) expert. Here, her insta-success tips



THE BRIT PACK Fergie cozies up to Sharon and Ozzy Osbourne in 2004.

## 1. DON'T BE CHEEKY

Go for a handshake first, and let the other person lean in for a kiss. Americans kiss once, and in parts of Europe, it's two or three. So you never get it right! I once said to Diana, "You're always getting it perfect," and she said, "I promise you, I have no idea who is who. You just have to go with it."

## 2. FIND A KIND FACE

Watch the room for a minute.

Do *not* go toward seven men in suits talking sports, because you'll probably be rejected. Search for someone who's got a kind look. Say, "Hello, I don't know anyone here. Can I get a bit of help? You've got a lovely face." Immediately, the person is going to want to help you.

## 3. REMEMBER NAMES

After I introduce myself, I immediately note something about that person. It might be

a brooch, or a tie. That way, when I come around the room an hour later, I'll remember, "Jimmy . . . green tie."

## 4. MIX AND MINGLE

I make an effort to connect with each person: three to five minutes for friends, 10 minutes with VIPs (hosts, officials, honorees, etc.). It helps if there are clusters of people, so I can drop in and out, enabling me to meet more guests.

## 5. FIB YOUR WAY OUT

If someone's droning on and on, you should say something like, "Sorry to interrupt you, but you know, I just realized the time. I'll be back in a second." You say it in such a lovely way that they honestly think you are coming back.

## 6. DON'T CRY OVER SPILLED WINE

Address it immediately with the host. Apologize and say, "There are two solutions: Send me the cleaning bill, or we'll clean it up now." Don't try to

be brave or funny. "Surrender and smile" is one of my favorite expressions.

## 7. SKIP THE BUBBLY

Champagne gives you bad, acidic breath. Don't eat the shrimp, either, because then you'll have champagne *and* shrimp breath! And avoid garlic—it's deeply unfriendly.

## 8. CHAT UP CELEBS

Approach them! Immediately, pay them a compliment. Then ask, "Do you know the host well?" Always get them to speak about themselves—everyone loves to do that.

## 9. NEVER DIS SUITORS ON THE SPOT

Say, "Could you ring me tomorrow? I don't have my diary with me." It is much better to let someone down the next day, because you've got to spend the next two hours with him in the room. But when he rings, don't *not* take the call! Deal with it; otherwise he's going to call again.

## SAYS FERGIE: EVERY POWER-PARTY GIRL NEEDS...

- 1 Note cards and a pen: "If you say you'll do something, do it. I always carry cards and a pen to write down notes. I like Smyth-son of Bond Street stationery." (smythson.com)
- 2 A bottle of water before the party to keep you hydrated.
- 3 Business cards: "But be very picky about giving them out." (alligator card holder, LAI, \$180; 212-794-3874)



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