

HOW TO SURVIVE MEETING THE PARENTS

1 Pay attention to your surroundings.

If you are prone to spilling things or tripping over rugs, move slowly and carefully. Present an image of confidence and poise.

2 Greet them with a firm, but brief, handshake.

A weak handshake is a turnoff, but so is squeezing too hard. Shake hands so that the entire hand is clasped. Let go of the hand after a few pumps. Maintain eye contact.

3 Do not kiss or hug the parents unless they make the first move.

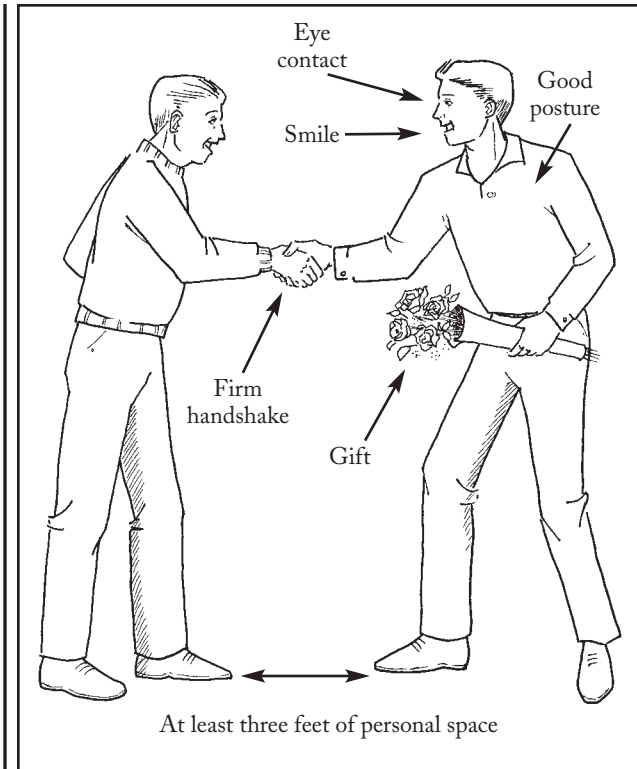
If they offer air kisses, fine, but never kiss a potential in-law on the mouth. If they opt to hug you, do not retreat from it.

4 Call them “Mr.” and “Mrs.” unless they ask you to address them by their first names.

This shows respect. Do not shorten or change their names or call them “Mom” or “Dad.”

5 Give them personal space.

Allow at least three feet of airspace during conversation.



6 Show poise.

Be positive, good natured, and relaxed. Smile, but not continuously: if you look happy all of the time, something's not right. Remember that good posture projects confidence and successfulness. Walk, stand, and sit up straight. Speak loud enough to be heard.

7 Be sincere and be yourself.

Do not pretend to be someone you are not. People can spot a fake a mile away. Do not try too hard to make an impression. At the same time, do not act too familiar—no winking, shoulder punching, or joking. Follow their lead.

8 Send a note or card the next day.

Mention how nice it was to finally meet them and that you look forward to seeing them again. If you stayed at their house for a while, thank them for an enjoyable visit.

Be Aware

Practicing the following social graces can help make a favorable impression:

- Ring the doorbell once only. Do not lean on the bell or pound the door.
- Turn off your cell phone and pager.
- If invited to dinner, bring wine, flowers, or dessert, even if they say not to.
- Wait to be invited inside, and wait to be seated. Do not sit down before they do.
- Pet the dog or cat.
- Compliment them on only one or two things: the view, the couch, a painting, the flowers—don't overdo it.
- Do not spend too much time in the bathroom (and do not go too often).

