4. Stay within an arm's-length distance of individuals whom you have just met.
One way of making strangers feel comfortable being around you is by respecting their territory. That means maintaining an arm's-length distance from them as you are conversing. If you get any closer, you may be perceived as invading the person's space.

PHRASES TO USE WHEN INTERACTING WITH SOMEONE YOU'VE JUST MET

Some call it first impressions. Others call it rapport building. When interacting with individuals whom you've just met, your initial comments will assist others in forming opinions of you.

When talking with others, position your questions by using interrogatives. For example ask, "How are you enjoying this conference?" rather than "Is this your first time at this conference?" By asking open-ended questions rather than close-ended ones, the person you've just met will probably offer more information about himself/herself.

Another phrase that usually opens conversation is "How's business?" The benefit of using this phrase is that you don't need to know anything about a person's field to encourage conversation.

HOW TO BEGIN ENJOYING THOSE DREADED BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

Schedule a limited amount of time to attend certain business functions. Designate both an arrival and a departure time. You may enjoy yourself more if you know you only have a limited amount of time to be there.

Realize that others may feel as inhibited as you do. By recognizing that, it may be easier to approach groups and to initiate conversation.

Make a point of learning one new thing about each person you meet (i.e., company affiliation, mutual acquaintance, etc.).

Last and certainly not least, have fun! The functions that you may dread going to the most can sometimes be the most enjoyable.
2. **IF YOU ARRIVE AT THE GET-TOGETHER AND FIND THAT YOU DON'T KNOW ANYONE, BE HONEST, BE UPFRONT AND BE THE FIRST TO SAY HELLO.**
   - For example, when approaching a group of people whose body language appears to be open to having other join them, say, "I don't know anyone here and wanted to introduce myself. My name is _______.
   - Most polished professionals who understand what it is like to enter a room filled with unfamiliar faces will welcome you into their group -- at least for a few minutes.

3. **AFTER MIXING AND MINGLING FOR A WHILE, GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK BY APPROACHING PEOPLE WHOM YOU KNOW.**
   - If appetizers are available, it may also be a good time to enjoy them.
   - Take note of the time before going back into the field. Decide how long you will continue to "work the room" before giving yourself another break or perhaps even making your escape -- I mean departure.
   - Unless you are part of the clean-up committee, don't be one of the last to leave. Wouldn't you rather have others be sorry to see you leave rather than sorry that you overextended your stay?

**HOW TO ESTABLISH INSTANT RAPPORT WITH OTHERS**

When you are making "small talk," be sincerely interested in the questions you are asking others. Most people can spot a phony a mile away.

When a person has answered your question(s), paraphrase what you heard with terms like: "It appears that...", "It sounds like....", "I understand that..."

Finally, during this interaction, use the person's name with whom you are interacting a few times during conversation. Using others' names appears to be the exception rather than the rule in business today.

**HOW TO POLITELY GET RID OF A BORE**

- It's all perspective. While certain people may be interesting to some, the same individuals may be perceived as nuisances to others. If you find yourself involved in a conversation with someone whom you consider less than interesting, good manners dictate that politeness prevail.
- The key rule for ridding yourself of a bore is to excuse yourself after you have said something referring to the other person. Example: "Good luck with your upcoming project."
- On the other hand, be sure that you are not perceived as the bore! When you see that the other person(s) attention is beginning to waver, it's probably time to move on.

**THE FOUR KEY WAYS TO FEELING COMFORTABLE IN A ROOM FULL OF STRANGERS**

Believe it or not, entering a room full of strangers is difficult for even the most outgoing person. The main difference between individuals entering a room with confidence and those walking into a function timidly is mastery of the situation. Here are the four key rules:

1. **Approach individuals who are standing alone.**
   In many instances, these people will be as pleased that you approached them as you may be to have someone to talk with.

2. **Treat everyone you meet as though he/she were the most important person at the gathering.**
   By being more sincerely interested in others, you will be perceived as more interesting.

3. **Listen more than you speak.**
   People will welcome your company if you are more interested in what they have to say than in what you have to share. The same individuals will be more attentive to what you have to say if they have asked you a question than if you offer the same information without being asked.