

# 10 Rules Of Mastering An Introduction

In today's world, introductions occur in both our personal and professional lives. Yet many of us fumble through the experience, feeling disheartened as we stumble over wording, wishing someone else would assume this responsibility.

Assume leadership and take charge. Here's your guide. Smoothly, effortlessly (and correctly) handle future introduction-making experiences. Want the edge? Need some confidence? Do this.

## **1. Don't rush introductions.**

Many people "zip" through them so quickly, they either stumble over wording or confuse the people being introduced. The United States is a "nervous" culture; we feel uncomfortable with silence and feel compelled to fill every moment with words. Proper introductions should consume a portion of time. Fight the urge to rush through the process.

## **2. In business situations, gender is irrelevant.**

Either gender can first extend the hand. What matters more, however, is a person's organizational rank. Generally, a handshake should be offered by the person of higher authority to the person of lower status.

## **3. Wait until the introduction is completed before you shake hands.**

End result? You pay closer attention to the name being voiced, especially valuable when the name is complex. "Iosifidis" is harder to catch than "Smith." Waiting equals increased understanding and retention.

Our global economy ensures we'll encounter people whose names may be a challenge. Seek clarification if needed. When I meet international participants in class, conferences, or corporate seminars, I'll sometimes ask, "*Would you please repeat your last name for me? I wish to ensure I pronounce correctly.*"

Names are important. Ensure correct pronunciation of both first AND last names. Otherwise, you're only 50% accurate. That's an F grade, by the way.

**4. Once introduced, use that person's name several times during the conversation.**

This technique dramatically increases memory retention. In public speaking class, we teach the strategy of word repetition. This same concept equally applies during introductions. Trust me: Repetition (Pete, Meet Repeat) is powerful.

**5. Learn the two rules in the "Introduction Formula":**

*RULE ONE: Determine the situation's "Very Important Person"/VIP.*

In purely business contexts, organizational rank determines VIP status. Recognize, however, that while the CEO is important, the client always trumps. No client, no CEO, no company. Client (big or small) is VIP #1. Always.

In social situations, however, the rules change. Here we default to rules of chivalry: elderly people are the VIP, then women, and finally (probably not an issue at this point) social rank would be the deciding consideration.

*RULE TWO: State the VIP's Name FIRST*

Example: "Mr. or Ms. VIP, I'd like to introduce Mr. or Ms. Lesser VIP."

Example: "Robert Jackson (Client), this is Caitlyn Coby, our company's CEO. Caitlyn Coby, this is Robert Jackson, our client from Boston visiting us for the week."

Note: In my own encounters, I'll usually opt to say both first and last names twice. A second pronunciation can encourage "name grasp."

**If you're feeling especially skilled in making the introduction, offer a "connector" (shared interest) that can then be used as a conversational launching-pad.**

Example: "Robert Jackson (Client), this is Caitlyn Coby, our company's CEO. Caitlyn Coby, this is Robert Jackson, our client from Boston visiting us for the week. You two should know you both majored in operations management and also share a love for animals.

**6. Be wary of referring to people in introductions as your "best friend," "most valued client," or "most skilled employee."**

These types of qualifiers can make other friends, clients, and employees feel disregarded, unimportant, and inadequate.

**7. If it's obvious someone doesn't remember your name, be understanding and offer a self-introduction.**

Extend your hand and offer a gracious, *"Hello, I'm LisaMarie Luccioni from UC's Department of Communication. We met last month at the Women Leading Women's Conference downtown. It's nice to see you again."*

**8. During self-introductions, don't give yourself an honorific:**

"I'm *Dr.* Steve Townsend," "I'm *Counselor* Deanna Troi," "I'm *Chief* Mike Walker," "I'm *Countess* Luanne." Not only incorrect protocol, but you risk sounding elitist. While others can give you an honorific, refrain from granting them to yourself.

**9. If someone is introduced as "President Williams" and you call them so during a conversation, they don't suddenly become "Greg" when you send them an email the next day (unless of course they explicitly gave you permission to do so).**

I'm surprised by how often people maintain convention in person and then take liberty in email.

Don't shy from introductions. Welcome them. Practice them. Be the bold communicator who makes the effort, not the reluctant follower who guesses or worse, doesn't even try.

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