

THE DECORUM STANDARD



The Room Read

Twelve rooms.
What each one expects of you.

You walk into a room and somebody decides something about you.

It happens in about three seconds and it happens before you say a word. They're reading your shoulders, your shoes, whether you look like you've been here before. By the time you open your mouth, they've formed a view and they're looking for evidence to confirm it.

This isn't unfair. It's just fast. Everybody does it, including you, including this morning.

The problem is that nobody teaches you what you're being read on. Some men learn it from a father, a first boss, a mentor who cared enough to say something. Most men never learn it at all and spend twenty years wondering why certain rooms never quite opened.

And most of what does get taught stops at the door. What to wear, how to shake a hand, be five minutes early. Then you're inside, and it's forty minutes long, and nobody ever told you when to speak or what you should be listening for.

This is that instruction, for twelve rooms you will actually stand in.

It's not about money. Nothing in here requires an expensive wardrobe and most of the rules cost nothing at all. It's about knowing what the room expects, and then meeting it.

How to use this

Every room follows the same eight parts. Each one opens with two drawings: the room in plan, and what to arrive in.

What the room is

What's actually being decided.

What they're reading

The specific signals in play.

What to wear

Not a vibe. Instructions.

What to bring

When to arrive

More consequential than most men think.

The first sixty seconds

What to do and what to say.

How to act

What you're listening for, when you speak, how you speak, what your body is doing, and the thing you can't fake.

The mistake

The one thing most men get wrong in this room.

Read the room you need. Read it the night before, not in the car.

The twelve rooms

01 The Board Presentation

02 The Job Interview

03 The First Day

04 The Client Dinner

05 The Negotiation

06 The Video Call

07 The Industry Conference

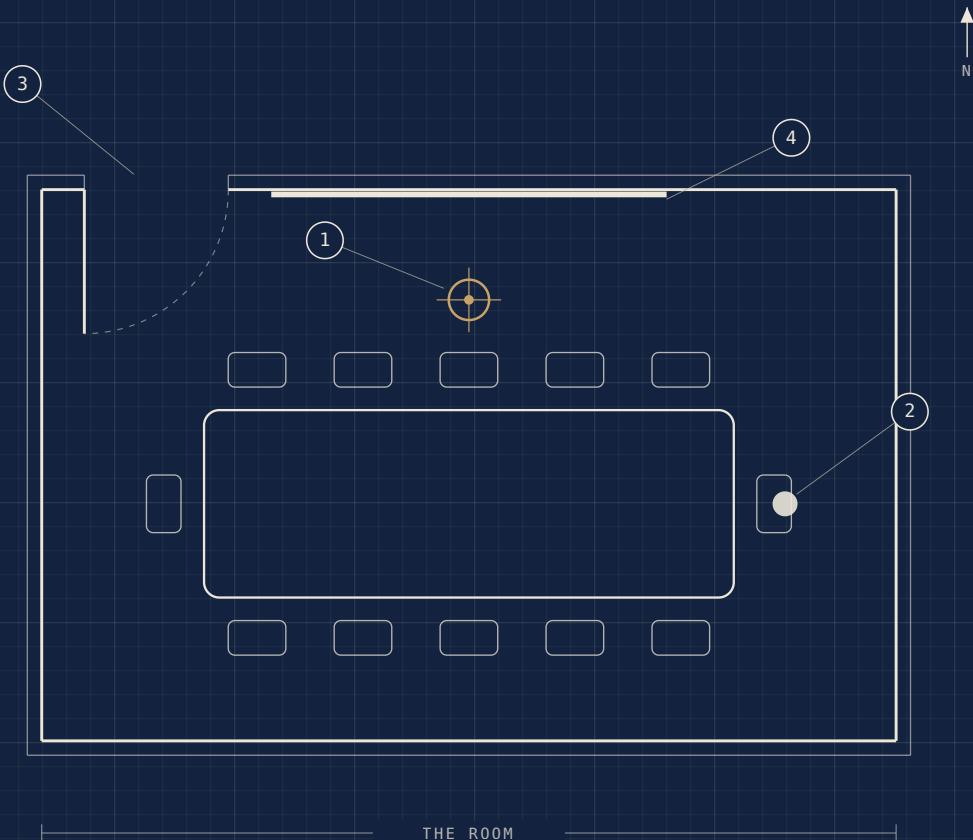
08 The Wedding

09 The Funeral

10 The Golf Outing

11 The Holiday Party

12 The Hospital Visit



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE BOARD PRESENTATION

DWG NO.
01

VIEW
PLAN

SHEET
1 OF 2

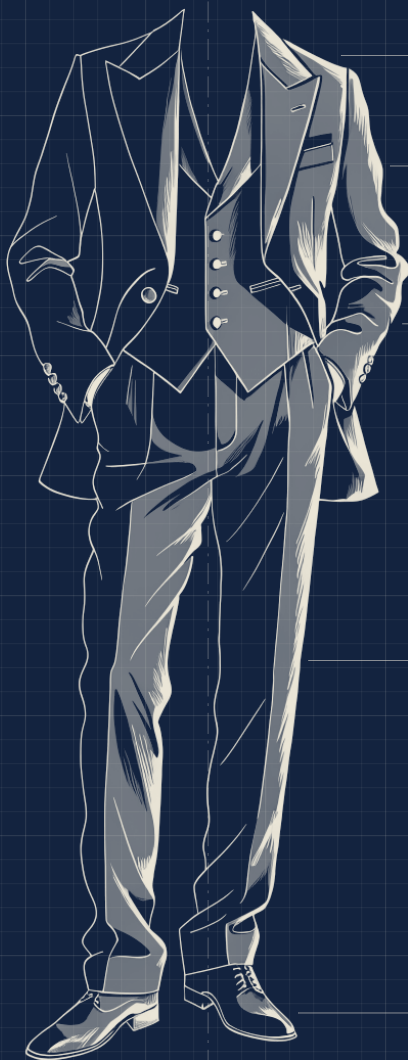
KEY

- 1 YOUR POSITION, STANDING
- 2 THE CHAIR. NOT AT THE HEAD
- 3 DOOR. BEHIND THE FAR END
- 4 SCREEN

*Come out from behind the table.
The chair is rarely at the head.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE BOARD PRESENTATION

DWG NO.

01

VIEW

ELEVATION

SHEET

2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 LAPEL. NOTCH OR PEAK
- 2 JACKET. NAVY OR CHARCOAL
- 3 WAISTCOAT. NEVER LOOSE
- 4 TROUSERS. ONE BREAK
- 5 SHOES. DARK, POLISHED

Nothing new. Nothing you have to think about.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A room where people who don't know you decide whether you're credible, and they decide it in about eleven minutes.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you already look like you operate at that level, or whether you're asking permission to. Whether you're nervous. Whether you know your own material well enough to be interrupted. Whether you'll take a hard question without getting defensive.

WHAT TO WEAR

The most conservative thing you own. A suit if anyone in that room will wear one, and probably even if they won't. Navy or charcoal. White or pale blue shirt. Dark leather shoes, actually polished. A tie if the chair wears one.

Nothing new. Not the shirt, not the shoes, not the jacket. A room like this is not where you find out something pulls at the shoulder.

WHAT TO BRING

Printed copies, one more than the headcount. A pen that didn't come from a hotel. Your laptop charged, and the deck backed up somewhere that isn't your laptop. Your own water, so you're not looking around for it at minute four.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Twenty minutes early to the building. Seven minutes early to the room. Enough to test the display and stand where you'll stand. Not so early that you're sitting alone while they file in and look at you.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Stand up. Say your name and your function even if you're sure they know it. Then frame the time and the structure.

I'm Michael. I run operations. I've got eleven minutes and three things.

Then start.

Do not thank them for their time. Do not apologize for the length. Do not say you'll try to be quick. Every one of those is a small request for permission, and this is not a room where you ask for it.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for the question behind the question. When somebody asks how you got to a number, they're almost never asking about the arithmetic. They're asking whether you'll defend it or fold. Listen for who the room defers to, because it is frequently not the person at the head of the table. And watch for the moment somebody stops taking notes. That's where you lost them, and you can still go back for it.

When you speak you have the floor until you don't. The second you're interrupted, stop. Let them finish the whole question even when you knew the answer four words in. Answer it, then say "does that get at it," and go on. Never talk over a board member, not even to complete your own sentence.

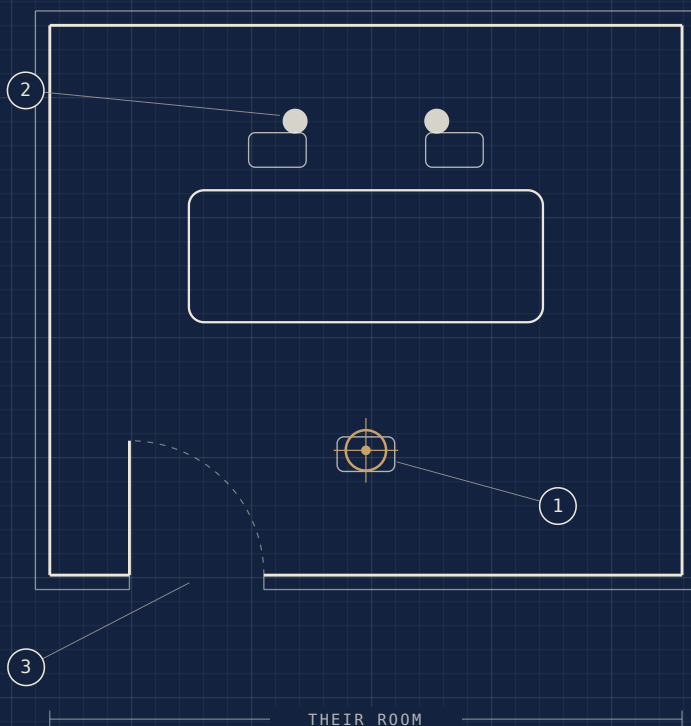
How you speak slower than feels right and shorter than feels right. Land the answer in two sentences and stop. If they want more, they'll ask, and the ask is a good sign, not a bad one. Never end on "does that make sense," which puts the burden on them and sounds like doubt. "Happy to go deeper on any of it" does the same job and costs you nothing.

Your body feet planted, weight even, hands out of pockets. When you're not the one presenting, sit back rather than leaning in and hovering. Take a note when somebody else is talking. It costs nothing and it reads as respect.

The thing you can't fake not knowing. When you don't know, say you don't know, say when you'll have it, and write it down in front of them. That single move buys more credibility than whatever answer you would have improvised.

THE MISTAKE

Standing behind the laptop. It's a shield and it reads like one. Come out from behind the table, or at minimum stand beside it. The men who get remembered in that room are the ones who weren't hiding behind furniture.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE JOB INTERVIEW

DWG NO.
02

VIEW
PLAN

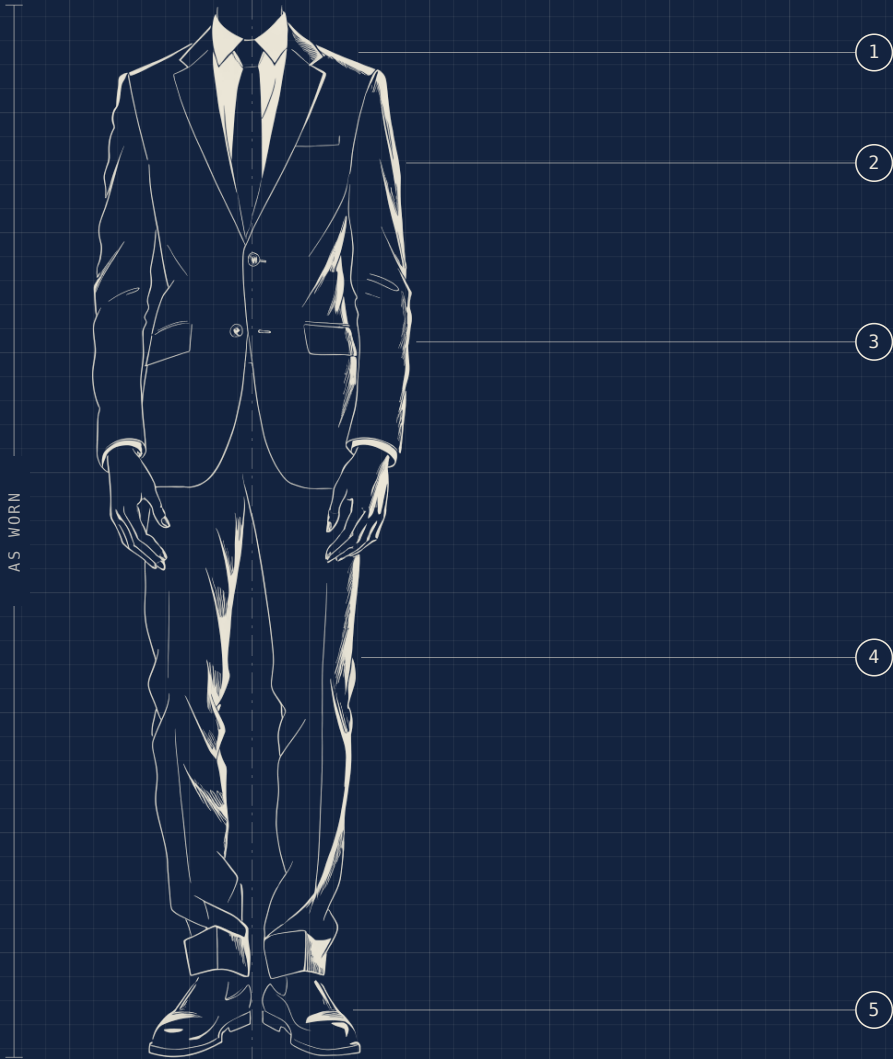
SHEET
1 OF 2

KEY

- 1 YOUR SEAT. SIT BACK
- 2 THE PANEL
- 3 DOOR YOU CAME THROUGH

*One notch above the office.
Never two. Sit back, not forward.*

CENTRE LINE



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE JOB INTERVIEW

DWG NO.
02

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. PRESSED, NOT STIFF
- 2 TIE. PLAIN WEAVE
- 3 JACKET. BUTTON THE TOP ONE
- 4 TROUSERS. ONE BREAK
- 5 SHOES. LACE-UP, LEATHER

Dress for the room you're trying to get into.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A room where they mostly decide whether they like you inside four minutes and then spend fifty-six looking for evidence.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you'd embarrass them in front of a client. Whether you want this specific job or any job. Whether you're already operating at the level, or asking to be promoted into it.

WHAT TO WEAR

One notch above the office dress code. Never two.

If they're in t-shirts, you're in a knit polo and good trousers. If they're in button-downs, you're in a jacket. If they're in suits, you're in a suit. Never a full suit at a company that hasn't seen one since 2015, because overdressing by two notches reads as badly as underdressing by one. It says you don't know the industry.

Check their careers page and their team photos before you decide. Ten minutes of looking beats guessing.

WHAT TO BRING

Nothing you need two hands for. A slim folio or nothing at all. A printed resume you will probably never take out, which is fine, because having it and not needing it is the point.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

In the lobby fifteen minutes early. Announce yourself at seven. Arriving to reception twenty minutes early makes somebody's morning awkward and they will mention it.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

A firm handshake and direct eye contact. Use their name once. "Thanks for making the time." Then stop talking and let them lead.

The most common failure in the first minute is filling silence. Let it sit. Comfortable silence reads as confidence and almost nobody can do it.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for what they keep coming back to. If they've circled the same problem three separate times, that's the actual job, whatever the posting said. Listen to how they talk about the person who left, because it tells you what happens to people in that seat. And listen for whether they say "we" or "they" about their own company.

When you speak answer, then stop. Most candidates lose the room by continuing past the end of a good answer, filling the pause with a worse version of what they just said. Save your questions for the end, but ask one good one in the middle. It turns an interrogation into a conversation and it changes the temperature of the whole hour.

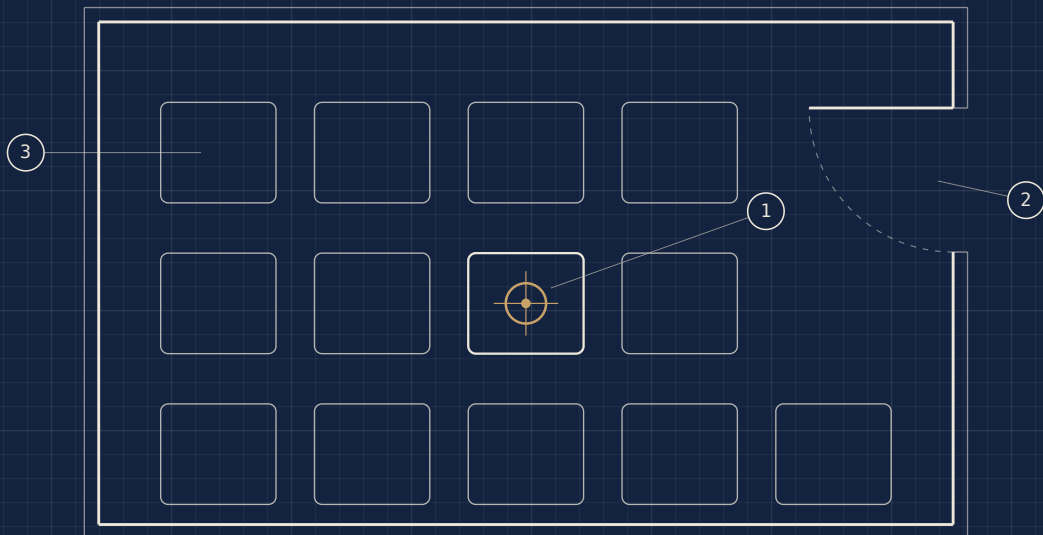
How you speak specific over impressive. Numbers, names of things, what you actually did. Sixty to ninety seconds an answer. Never "I'm really passionate about." Passion is a claim. Say what you did and what happened, and let them draw the conclusion.

Your body sit back, not forward. Forward reads as eager, and eager reads as available rather than wanted. Hands still, on the table or in your lap. Whatever you do when you're nervous, you're doing it right now, so find out what it is before you go.

The thing you can't fake the failure question. Everybody gives the safe one, the failure that's secretly a strength. Give a real one with a real cost and what it changed about how you work. It's the answer they'll repeat to the hiring committee, and it's the only part of the hour that sounds like a person.

THE MISTAKE

Dressing for the job you have. You're not being evaluated on where you've been. Dress for the room you're trying to get into.



THE FLOOR

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE FIRST DAY

DWG NO.
03

VIEW
PLAN

SHEET
1 OF 2

KEY

- 1 YOUR DESK
- 2 DOOR, WHO LETS YOU IN
- 3 THE ONES WHO DECIDE THINGS

*Week one is a listening week.
Write every name down.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

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4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE FIRST DAY

DWG NO.
03

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. THE SAME EVERY DAY
- 2 TIE. OPTIONAL BY WEEK TWO
- 3 JACKET. HALF A NOTCH DOWN
- 4 TROUSERS. NO CREASE DRAMA
- 5 SHOES. ALREADY BROKEN IN

*Half a notch under the interview.
Then calibrate down all week.*

WHAT THE ROOM IS

The only day where everyone is watching you and nobody expects anything from you yet. Spend it well.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you're going to fit. Whether you think you're better than the room. How much effort you made on a day when you didn't have to.

WHAT TO WEAR

What you wore to the final interview, or half a notch under it. Then spend the first week calibrating down toward the room. It is easy to relax your dress over time. It is very hard to escalate it without everyone noticing.

WHAT TO BRING

A paper notebook and a pen. Taking notes on paper on day one reads as attentive in a way a laptop never will, and people remember it.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Fifteen minutes before they told you. Not more. Somebody physically has to let you in, and being there at 7:40 for an 8:30 start creates a problem rather than an impression.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

With every new person, the same three beats. Your name. Your role in one sentence. One question about theirs. Then move on.

| *James, I'm joining on the product side. What do you work on?*

HOW TO ACT

Listen for who actually decides things, as opposed to who has the title, because in most organizations those are two different lists. Listen for who people go to when they're stuck. And listen to what the room complains about, because in six months that's what you'll be measured on fixing.

When you speak rarely. Week one is a listening week and it is the only one you get. In meetings, ask one clarifying question and take notes. Do not offer a solution in your first week, especially when you have a good one. The good one will still be good in three weeks and by then you'll know why nobody tried it.

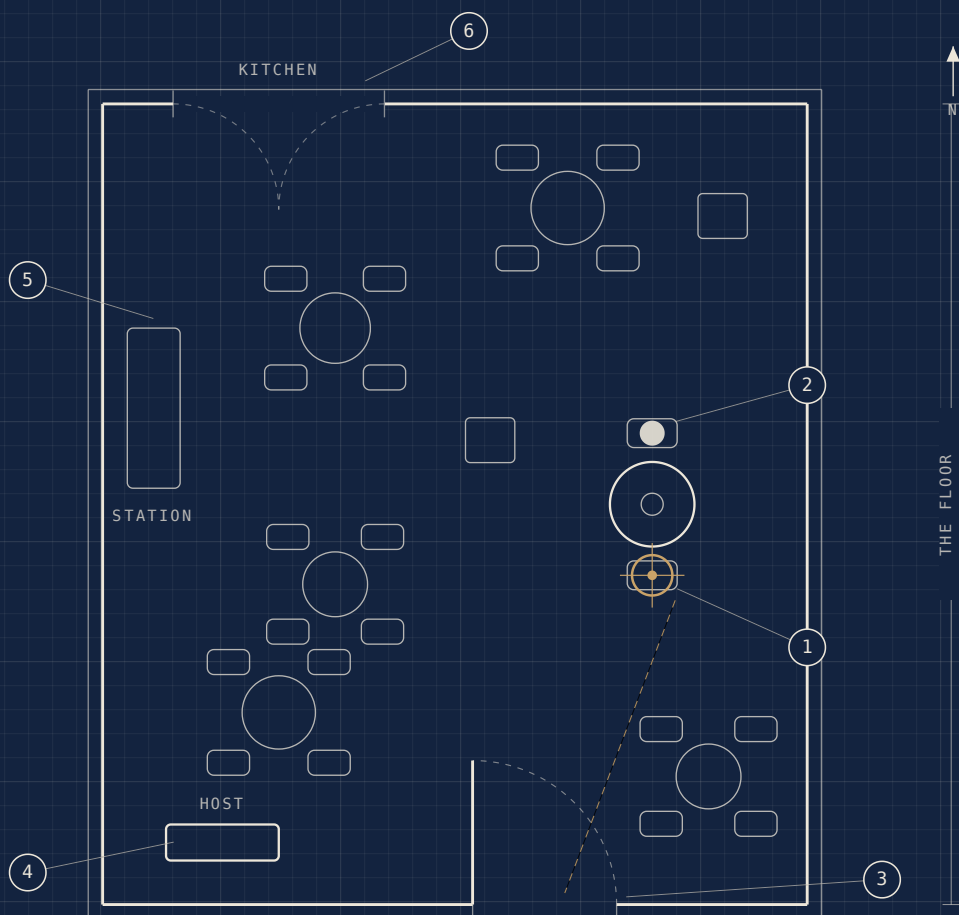
How you speak in questions, not statements. "How does this normally work" beats every observation you could make, and it gets you the same information without spending anything.

Your body open, unhurried, available. Eat lunch with people rather than at your desk, even when you'd rather not, and especially on day one.

The thing you can't fake names. Write every one down on day one with a note about the person, and use them correctly on day two. It's the single highest-return thing you will do that week and almost nobody does it.

THE MISTAKE

Talking about where you came from. Nobody at the new company cares how it was done at the old one, and definitely not in week one. Every time you say "at my last company," you spend credibility you haven't earned yet. Wait ninety days.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE CLIENT DINNER

DWG NO.

04

VIEW

PLAN

SHEET

1 OF 2

KEY

- 1 YOUR SEAT. QUIET SIDE, OFF THE ENTRANCE
- 2 YOUR GUEST. THE SEAT WITH THE VIEW
- 3 THE DOOR. NOT YOUR JOB TO WATCH IT
- 4 HOST STAND. THE CARD, ON THE WAY IN
- 5 SERVICE STATION. THE SERVER'S ROUTE
- 6 THE PASS. WHERE THE ROOM IS LOUDEST

*The seat with the view is theirs.
You take the quiet side.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

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4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE CLIENT DINNER

DWG NO.

04

VIEW

ELEVATION

SHEET

2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. OPEN, ONE BUTTON
- 2 SHIRT. NO TIE, NO LOGO
- 3 JACKET. IT STAYS ON
- 4 TROUSERS. DARK
- 5 SHOES. LEATHER, NOT TRAINERS

*You can always take a jacket off.
You cannot produce one.*

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A sales meeting where nobody will say the word sale.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you're comfortable in a nice room. Whether they'd put you in front of their own people. Whether you'll drink too much.

WHAT TO WEAR

A jacket. Always a jacket, even when they said casual, especially when they said casual. No tie unless you know they'll wear one. Dark trousers, leather shoes.

The logic is simple. You can always take a jacket off. You cannot produce one.

WHAT TO BRING

A card. And a credit card you've already handed to the host or the maître d' on the way in, so the check never touches the table.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Ten minutes early, and the booking is yours. Ask for a table away from the kitchen door and the service station, and ask when you book rather than when you arrive, because by then the only table left is the one nobody asked for. You are about to talk across that table for two hours and those are the two loudest points in any dining room.

Then stop at the host stand on your way in. That's where the card goes anyway. Give them your guest's name while you're standing there, and ask them to walk your guest to the table.

If the place is small, don't sit at all. Wait by the door and walk in together.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Your instinct is the seat facing the door. Everybody's is. You want to see them come in and you want to see the room.

Give it away.

The seat with the view is your guest's. You take the quiet side, where you can see the approach without facing the entrance. There are two reasons and the second one is the real one. You don't need the door, because you already asked the host stand to walk your guest to the table, so they arrive escorted and you'll see them coming from ten feet out. And anyone who can see the whole room looks at the whole room. Your eyes go to the door every time it opens. You never notice you're doing it and your guest catches every one of them. The lesser seat isn't manners. It's what keeps your attention on the one person who's supposed to have it.

If it's a banquette, the banquette is theirs. If it's a four-top, take a side chair.

Be on your feet before they reach the table. Greet by name. Do not open with business. Order a drink at the same tier as your guest. If they order sparkling water, you order sparkling water. If they order a glass of wine, you order a glass of wine. Matching is the entire move.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for who at their table defers to whom, because the org chart in the room is rarely the org chart on paper, and the quiet one is often the one who decides. Listen for the personal thing somebody mentions once and never returns to, because that's what you follow up on in six weeks. And listen for the problem they raise casually, almost as an aside. That's usually the real one. The rehearsed problem is the one they lead with.

When you speak they set the pace and you match it. If business comes up, follow it. If it hasn't come up by dessert, let it go and put it in writing tomorrow morning. A dinner where nobody discussed business is not a failed dinner, and treating it like one is how you turn a relationship into a transaction.

How you speak ask more than you answer. Aim for them talking about sixty percent of the time. When you do talk about your own work, one sentence and then a question back.

Your body phone in your jacket. Not on the table, not face down on the table, not in your hand under the table. Away, and for the whole meal.

The thing you can't fake how you treat the server. Everyone at that table is watching, including the ones who look like they aren't, and it's the only unguarded read they'll get of you all night.

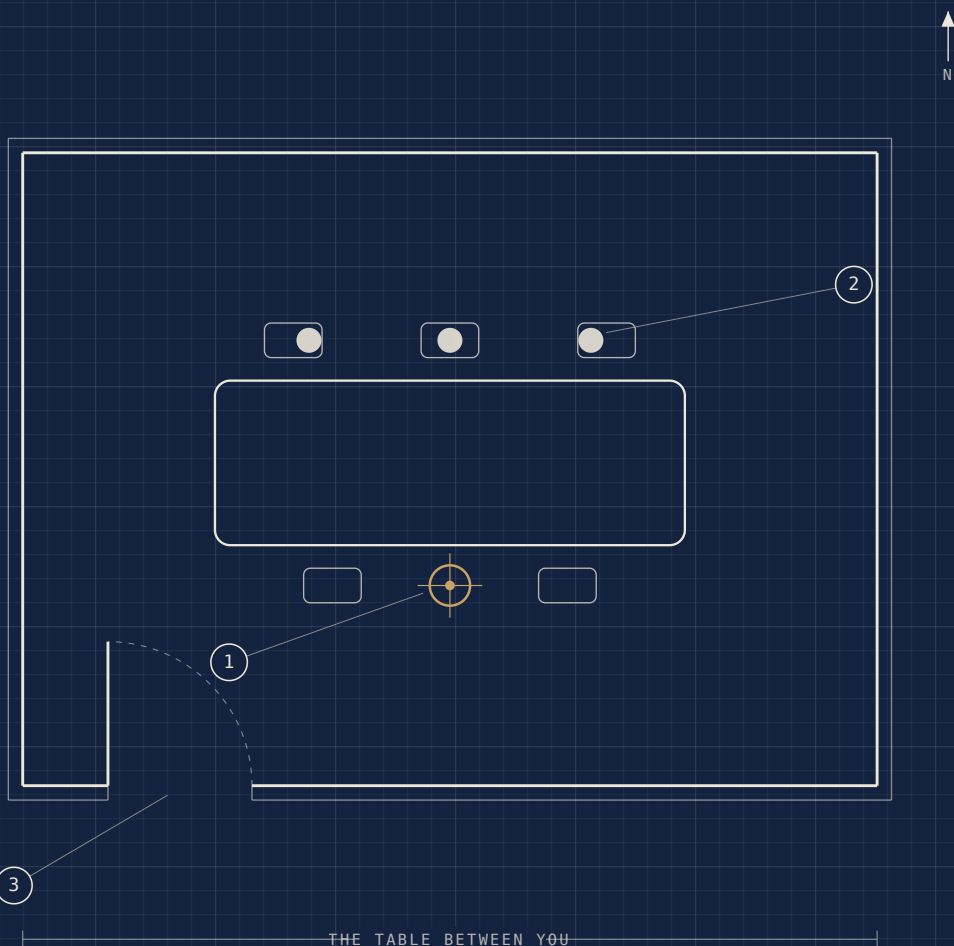
THE MISTAKE

Two of them, and they're both about money and control.

Ordering the most expensive thing on the menu. Order in the middle. Nobody has ever lost a deal ordering the second-cheapest entrée and plenty of men have lost one ordering the veal.

And letting the check land on the table. Handle it before you sit down. A check that arrives, gets grabbed at, and gets argued over turns the last five minutes of a good dinner into a small performance about who has money.

One more. Stop drinking one drink before you want to.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE NEGOTIATION

DWG NO.
05

VIEW
PLAN

SHEET
1 OF 2

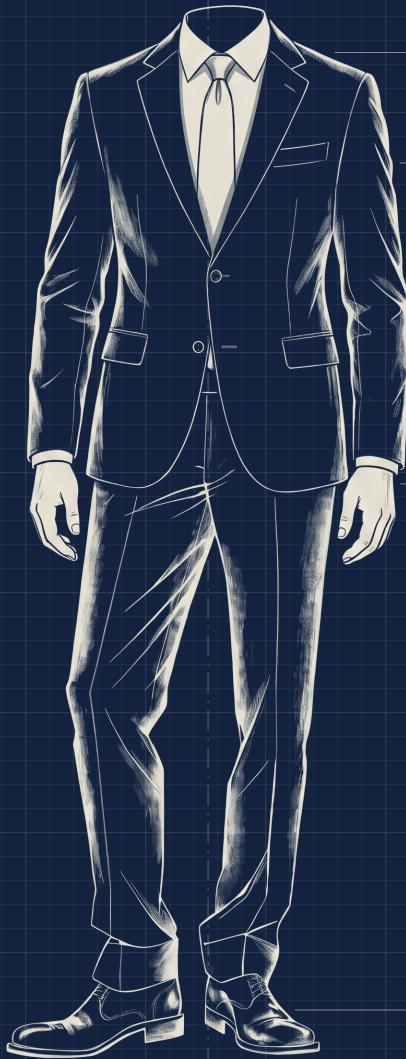
KEY

- 1 YOUR SIDE. SIT ALL THE WAY BACK
- 2 THEIRS. WATCH WHO REPEATS
- 3 THE DOOR YOU CAN WALK OUT OF

*Sit all the way back.
Say the number, then stop.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE NEGOTIATION

DWG NO.
05

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. WHITE OR PALE BLUE
- 2 TIE. NOTHING ANYONE NOTICES
- 3 JACKET. NEUTRAL. NOT NEW
- 4 WRIST. NO WATCH TODAY
- 5 SHOES. QUIET

If you fidget with it, don't wear it.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A room where whoever is more comfortable with silence usually wins.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you need this. Whether you've done your homework. Whether you'll flinch when the number lands.

WHAT TO WEAR

Neutral and forgettable. This is the one room in this document where you want the clothes to disappear completely, because every bit of attention on your jacket is attention off your position.

Nothing new. Nothing tight. Nothing you fidget with. If you touch your watch when you're thinking, don't wear the watch.

WHAT TO BRING

Your number, written down before you walked in. Your walk-away number, written down next to it. Both decided somewhere calm, hours earlier, because you will not think clearly in that chair and you're not supposed to.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

On time. Not early. Early hands them the room, the seat, and the first move.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Pleasant, brief, unhurried. Sit all the way back in the chair. Do not perch. Do not open with your number.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for which of their asks they repeat, because repetition is priority and it's the only reliable signal of it. Listen for the difference between “we can't” and “we don't usually,” which are two entirely different sentences and only one of them is a wall. And listen for what they never mention at all. The omission is where you have room to move.

When you speak less than they do. Ask a question, then let them answer all the way to the end, including the part after they think they've finished. Take a visible pause before you respond, every single time. It slows the entire room down to your pace and it costs you nothing.

How you speak flat and unhurried, with no qualifiers. “That doesn't work for us” is a complete sentence. “That doesn't really work for us, unfortunately” gave away three separate things. And never explain your number unless you're asked, because explanation reads as justification, and justification is an invitation to negotiate.

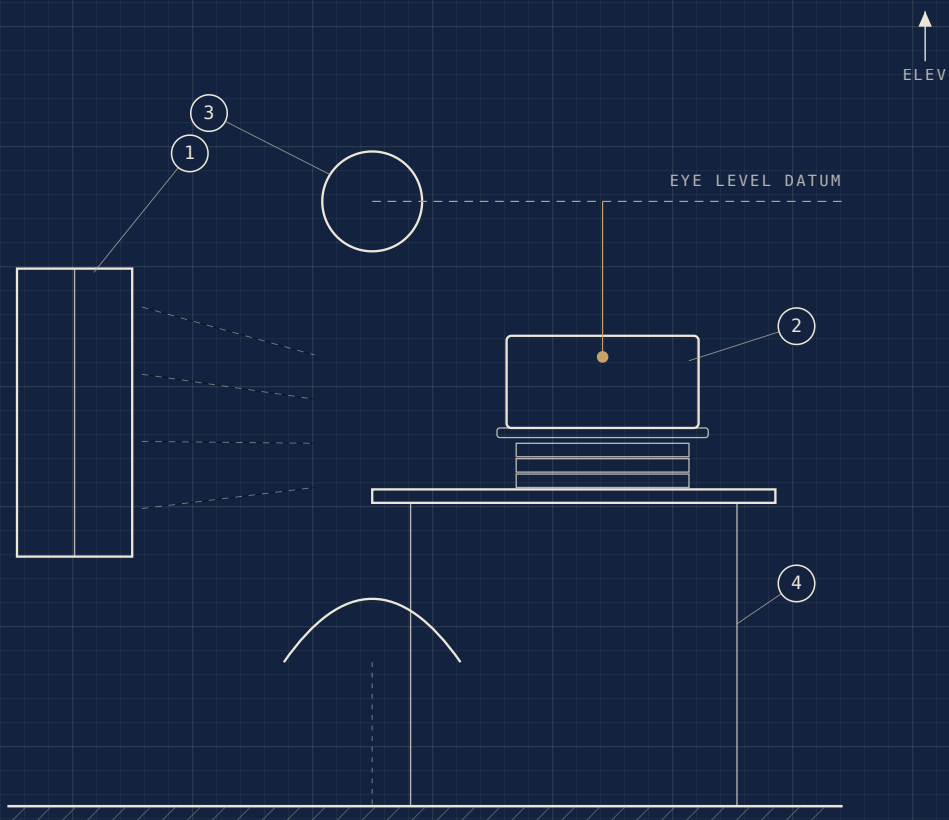
Your body still. Whatever your hands do when you're anxious, that's the tell, and the other side is looking for it. Sit all the way back. Do not lean in when the number lands.

The thing you can't fake being willing to walk. If you're not, they'll know inside ten minutes, and everything that happens after that is theater with a predetermined ending.

THE MISTAKE

Talking after you've made your offer.

Say the number. Then stop. The silence that follows will feel much longer than it is, and the man who breaks it negotiates against himself. Almost every bad deal in your career came from filling that gap.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE VIDEO CALL

DWG NO.

06

VIEW

PLAN

SHEET

1 OF 2

KEY

1 WINDOW. LIGHT FROM FRONT

2 LENS AT EYE LEVEL

3 HEAD IN UPPER THIRD

4 DESK EDGE

Camera at eye level.

Light in front. Books underneath.

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE VIDEO CALL

DWG NO.
06

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. ALWAYS A COLLAR
- 2 SHIRT. SOLID. NO FINE STRIPE
- 3 SLEEVES. DOWN AND BUTTONED
- 4 TROUSERS. YES. ANYWAY
- 5 SHOES. YOU WILL STAND UP

A collar. Always a collar.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

The room you're in most often, and the only one where you control every single variable. Most men control none of them.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Your framing, your lighting, your background, and whether you look like you take this seriously or like they caught you between things.

WHAT TO WEAR

A collar. Always a collar. It frames the face and it's the whole difference between dressed and awake.

Solid mid-tone colors. No thin stripes, no small checks, both of them strobe on camera and it's distracting in a way people can't name but do feel. Avoid pure white, it blows out. Avoid pure black, it flattens you into a silhouette.

The setup, which matters more than the shirt. Camera at eye level. Books under the laptop if that's what it takes, and it usually is. A camera below your chin points up your nose and it is unflattering on every human being alive.

Light in front of you, not behind. A window you face is free and better than any ring light. A window behind you turns you into a shadow.

Frame yourself with your eyes about a third of the way down the screen and a little space above your head. Not centered, not decapitated. Background clean, or blurred. Never a novelty.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Two minutes early, camera on, muted. Being visibly present before you're addressed does quiet work.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

When you speak, look at the lens. Not at their face on your screen, not at yourself. The lens is the only eye contact available in that room and everybody feels its absence without knowing why.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for who unmutes, because that's who is about to speak and it's the only body language the medium gives you. Watch the participant list for names you didn't expect. And listen for the tone shift when the senior person joins, because the meeting you were in is now a different meeting.

When you speak say your name before your point on any call with more than five people. "This is Michael, two thoughts." It feels overly formal and it's the only thing that actually works. And leave a full beat after somebody finishes before you start, or you'll collide, and the collision costs more time than the pause did.

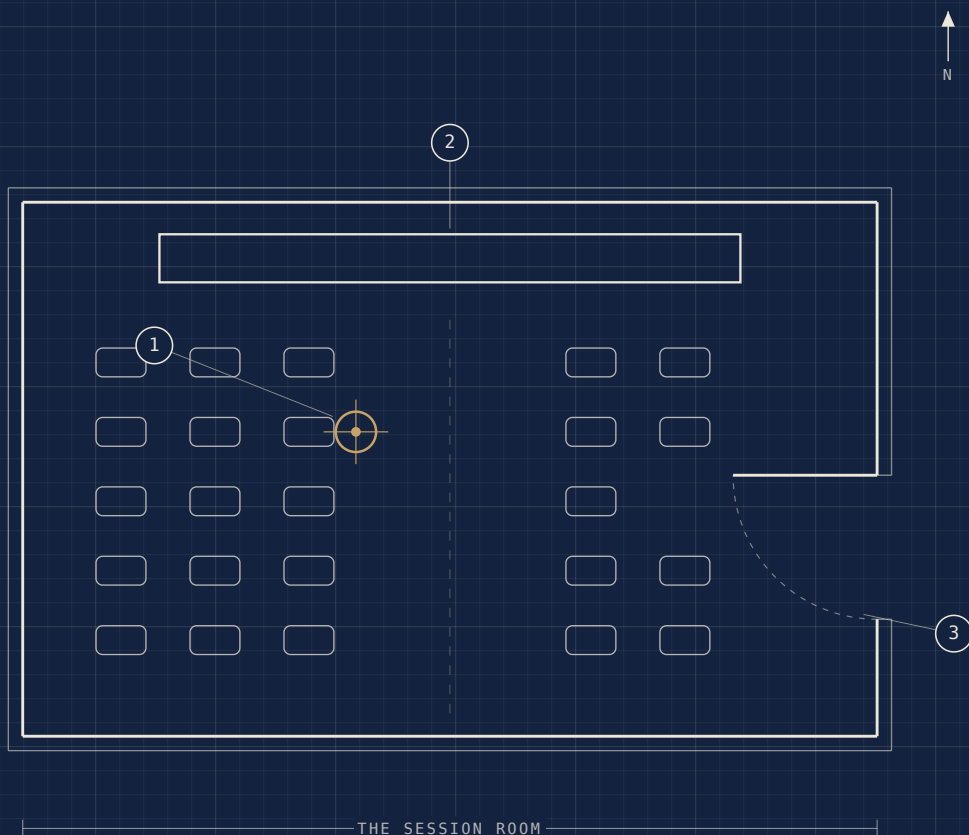
How you speak slower and more deliberate than you would in a room, because lag eats the front of your sentences and people miss your first four words. Shorter contributions, too. Attention on a video call is a fraction of what it is across a table and everyone is pretending otherwise.

Your body nod while listening. On video, stillness reads as absence, and mild visible reaction is the only way anyone knows you're there. And do not look at your own thumbnail. Hide it if you have to, because you will, and everybody can tell.

The thing you can't fake not multitasking. The eyes go sideways, the pause before your answer runs a half second long, and every person on that call knows exactly what just happened. Close the other windows.

THE MISTAKE

The laptop flat on the desk. Go fix it now. It takes two books and thirty seconds and it changes how you're read on every call for the rest of your career.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

DWG NO.
07

VIEW
PLAN

SHEET
1 OF 2

KEY

1 SECOND OR THIRD ROW, ON THE AISLE

2 STAGE

3 SIDE DOOR. LEAVE WITHOUT A SCENE

*Second or third row, on the aisle.
Be the third to speak, not the first.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

DWG NO.
07

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. KNIT POLO OR SOFT
- 2 JACKET. UNSTRUCTURED
- 3 HANDS. OUT WHEN YOU SPEAK
- 4 TROUSERS. YOU WILL WALK MILES
- 5 SHOES. BROKEN IN. NOT NEW

*You will regret new shoes
by two o'clock on day one.*

WHAT THE ROOM IS

Three days of being read by people who decide in ten seconds whether to keep talking to you.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Your shoes, your badge, and whether you look like you're about to sell them something.

WHAT TO WEAR

An unstructured jacket and trousers you can walk eight miles in, because you will. Shoes that are broken in. You will regret new shoes by two o'clock on the first day and you'll be useless by the third.

A jacket over a knit polo is the highest-return outfit at any conference. Dressed enough to be taken seriously, comfortable enough to survive.

WHAT TO BRING

Cards. A phone battery. One bag that doesn't look like swag.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

To sessions, five minutes early. Sit in the second or third row, on an aisle. Front row reads as eager, back row reads as uninterested, and the aisle means you can leave a bad session without making it a moment.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Name, company in four words, then a question. Never a pitch.

David, commercial side, Harlow Group. What brought you to this one?

That question outperforms anything you could possibly say about yourself, because it lets them talk and it tells you in thirty seconds whether this is a conversation worth having.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for what people complain about in the hallway, which is the actual state of the industry and is never what's on the stage. And listen for a name that comes up twice in two different conversations, because that's the person you should be trying to meet.

When you speak in a group, be the third to speak rather than the first. The first person to talk in a circle of strangers is performing. The third is participating. One-on-one, ask two questions before you say anything at all about yourself.

How you speak short. Everyone is tired and half-listening by eleven in the morning. And you need to be able to say what you do in one sentence a stranger understands. If it takes you three, you lost them somewhere in the second.

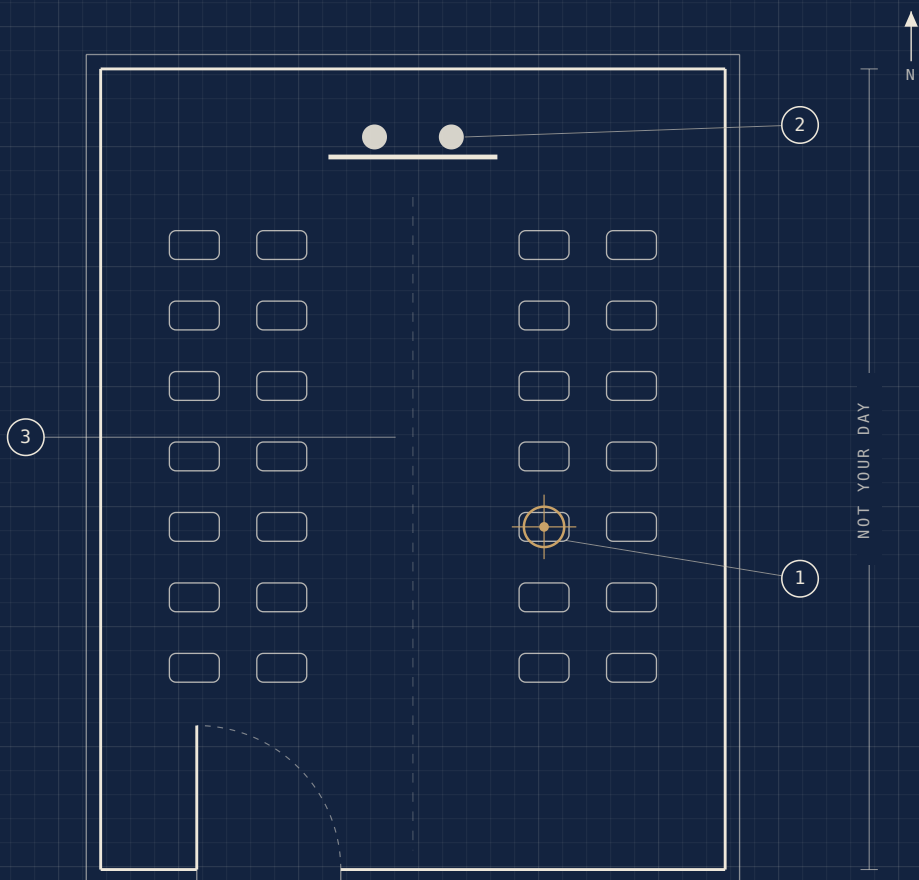
Your body open stance, and physically step back to make room when somebody approaches a circle you're standing in. The men who get remembered at conferences are the ones who opened the circle.

The thing you can't fake leaving well. "Good to meet you, I'm going to go find some coffee." Warm, clean, no excuse required. The man who can't exit a conversation gracefully is the man nobody starts one with on day two.

THE MISTAKE

Treating the floor like a sales floor. Everyone can feel it and everyone is avoiding those men by lunchtime on day one. The conversations that turn into anything are the ones where you were interested first.

Also, the lanyard. Keep the badge facing out and at chest height so people don't have to squint at your sternum, and take it off entirely at dinner.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE WEDDING

DWG NO.
08

VIEW
PLAN

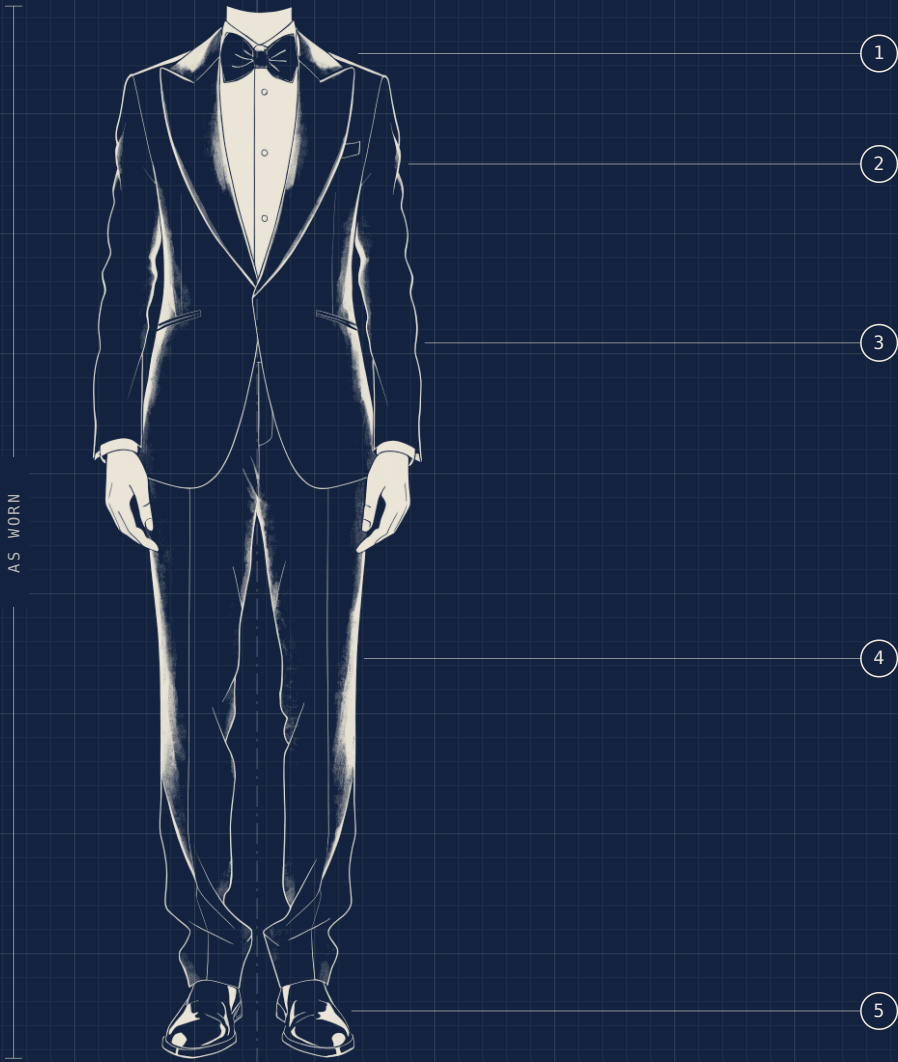
SHEET
1 OF 2

KEY

- 1 YOUR SEAT. BACK HALF
- 2 THE COUPLE
- 3 THE AISLE. KEEP IT CLEAR

*Somebody else's day.
Thirty minutes before the printed time.*

CENTRE LINE



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE WEDDING

DWG NO.
08

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 BOW TIE. TIED, NOT CLIPPED
- 2 LAPEL. PEAK OR SHAWL
- 3 JACKET. FOLLOW THE INVITATION
- 4 TROUSERS. NO BELT
- 5 SHOES. BLACK. POLISHED

*Follow the invitation exactly.
It is not a suggestion.*

WHAT THE ROOM IS

Somebody else's day. Every decision in this section follows from that one sentence.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you respected the dress code, and whether you're going to become a problem after ten o'clock.

WHAT TO WEAR

Follow the invitation exactly. It isn't a suggestion and the couple chose those words carefully.

Black tie means a tuxedo. Not a dark suit with a bow tie. If you don't own one, rent one, and get it altered.

Black tie optional means a tuxedo or your darkest suit with a tie.

Cocktail means a suit.

Semi-formal or dressy casual means a jacket and trousers, tie optional.

Beach or destination means lighter fabric and lighter color, and it still means a jacket exists somewhere on your body at the ceremony.

Never white. Never ivory. Never the color the wedding party is wearing, which takes one text message to find out.

WHAT TO BRING

The gift sent ahead, not carried in. Cash for the bar, the valet, and the coat check.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Thirty minutes before the time printed on the invitation, which is earlier than the ceremony actually starts. Sliding in as the processional begins is a story people tell for years and it's never a good one.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Find the couple only when there's no line. One sentence, warm and specific, then move. They have two hundred of these and the kindest thing you can do is be brief.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for the register the family sets. Every wedding has one, somewhere between solemn and loose, and it's set within the first hour. You match it. You don't lead it and you definitely don't try to change it.

When you speak not during anything. Not the ceremony, not the toasts, not the first dance, not the father walking her in. That should be obvious and every year it isn't.

How you speak warm and brief with the couple. With the strangers at your table, ask how they know the couple. That single question works every time and it's the only one you need for the entire evening.

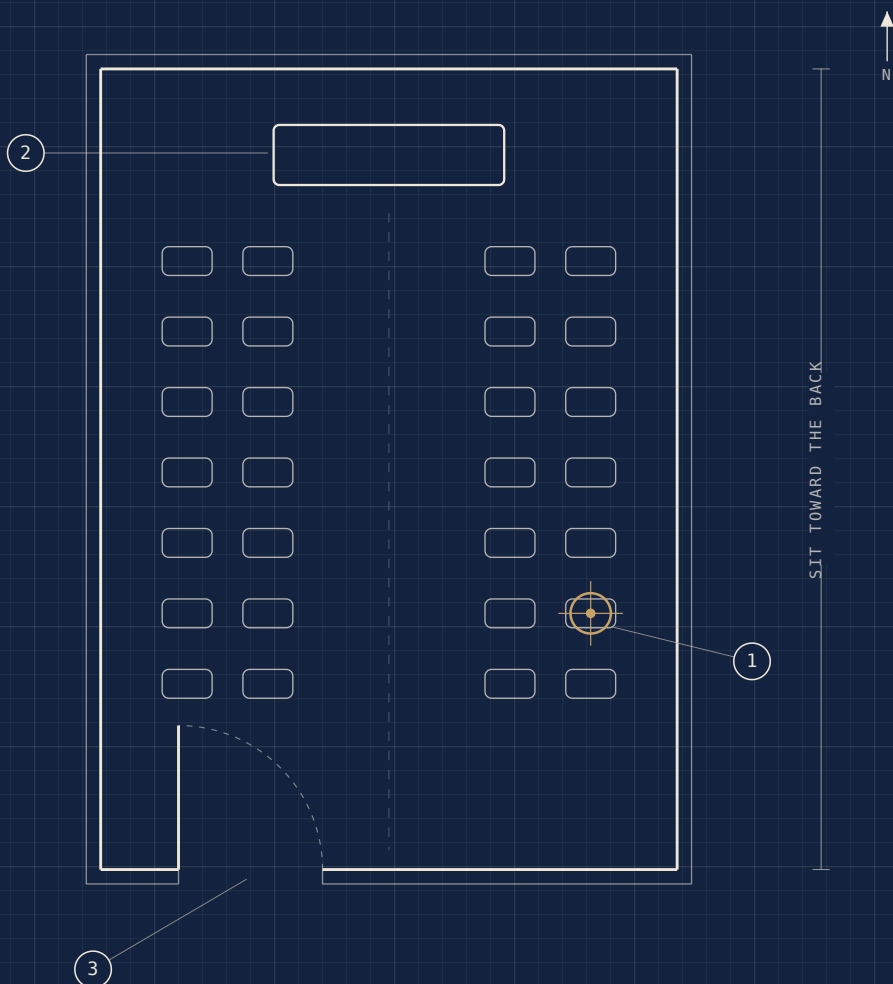
Your body dance if there's dancing. Not dancing is more conspicuous than dancing badly, and people forgive the second one instantly.

The thing you can't fake being happy for them. If you're not, that's your business, but then it's a short night and a quiet exit, not a long night and a comment somebody repeats.

THE MISTAKE

Drinking at the pace an open bar makes possible. It's free and it's four hours and the math is not on your side.

And speeches. If you weren't asked, you don't have one.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE FUNERAL

DWG NO.

09

VIEW

PLAN

SHEET

1 OF 2

KEY

1 YOUR SEAT. BACK, UNLESS FAMILY

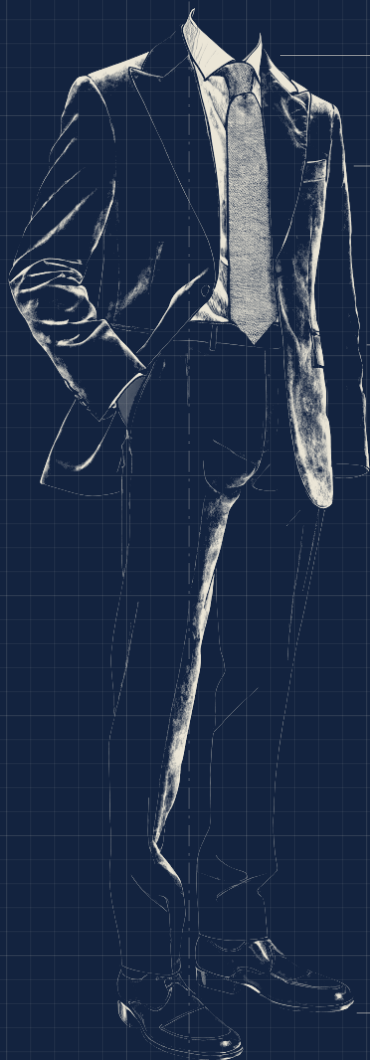
2 THE FRONT. NOT YOURS

3 DOOR. LEAVE QUIETLY

*Fifteen minutes early. Sit at the back.
Say the one true thing and stop.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE FUNERAL

DWG NO.
09

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. WHITE. PLAIN
- 2 TIE. DARK. NO PATTERN
- 3 SUIT. THE DARKEST YOU OWN
- 4 POCKET. A CLEAN HANDKERCHIEF
- 5 SHOES. BLACK. NOTHING SHINY

*Nothing that shines.
Nothing anybody could describe.*

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A room where nothing you do will be remembered, except your absence.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Nothing. That's the point. The correct outcome here is that nobody notices you at all.

WHAT TO WEAR

A dark suit. Navy, charcoal, or black. White shirt. A dark tie with no pattern, or no tie if the family has said casual and meant it. Black leather shoes. No jewelry beyond a watch and a wedding ring. Nothing that shines, nothing that makes noise, nothing anybody could describe afterward.

WHAT TO BRING

Nothing. A clean handkerchief, and understand that it isn't for you.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Fifteen minutes early. Sit toward the back unless you're family or you've been asked to sit forward.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Two sentences to the family. Then stop.

I'm so sorry. He was the only person who ever taught me how to do this job.

One specific true thing is worth more than any paragraph. Say it and let it land.

Do not say you know how they feel. Do not ask how they're doing, because they will have to perform an answer for the sixtieth time that day. Do not tell a long story about yourself.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for whether the person in front of you wants to talk or wants quiet. It changes hour to hour and person to person, and the same man who wanted company at eleven wants to be left alone at one. Follow. Never lead.

When you speak when spoken to. Otherwise be present and quiet. In a receiving line, say your one sentence and move, so the person behind you can say theirs.

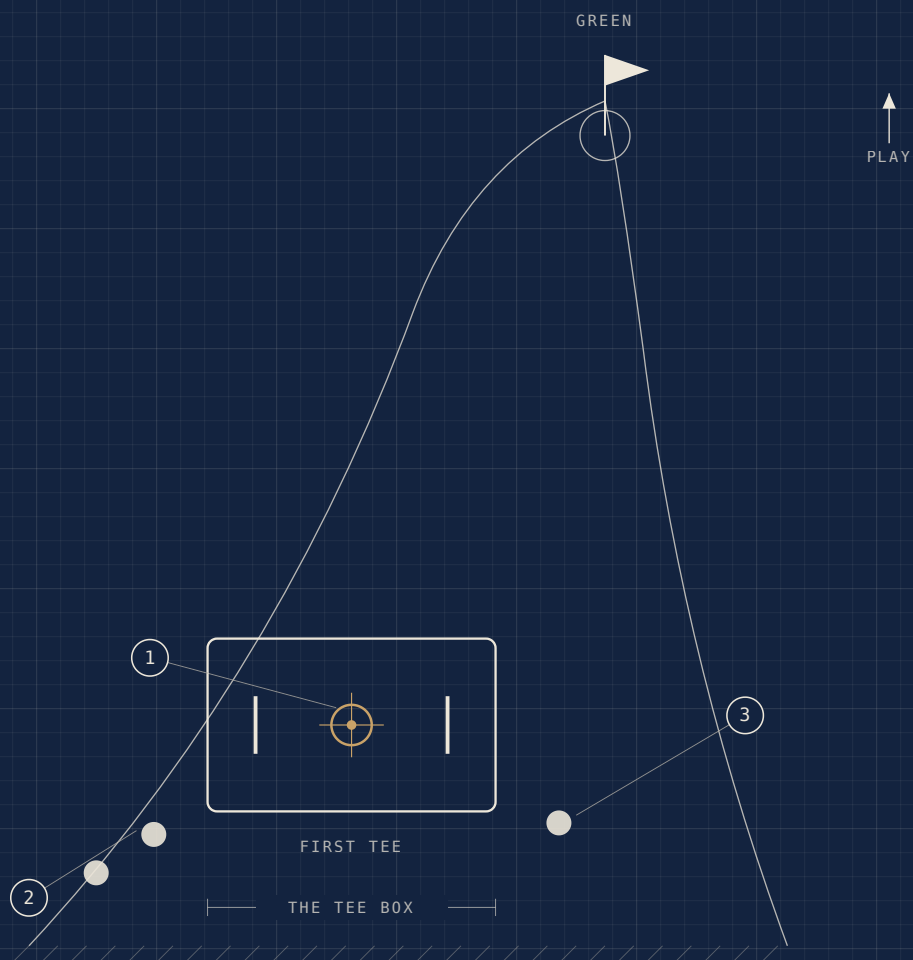
How you speak low, slow, and short. No stories unless you're asked for one, and if you are, tell one, and make it about the person who died rather than about you.

Your body present and unhurried. Do not look at your phone anywhere in that building. And do not be the man laughing in the parking lot afterward, even when the story is a good one. Especially then.

The thing you can't fake showing up. Everything else on this page is detail. The people who came are remembered for years, and the people who didn't are remembered longer.

THE MISTAKE

Staying too long and talking too much. Twenty minutes at the reception is enough unless you were genuinely close. Go, be seen, say the one thing, and leave. Presence is the entire gift.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE GOLF OUTING

DWG NO.

10

VIEW

PLAN

SHEET

1 OF 2

KEY

1 YOU. FORTY-FIVE MINUTES EARLY

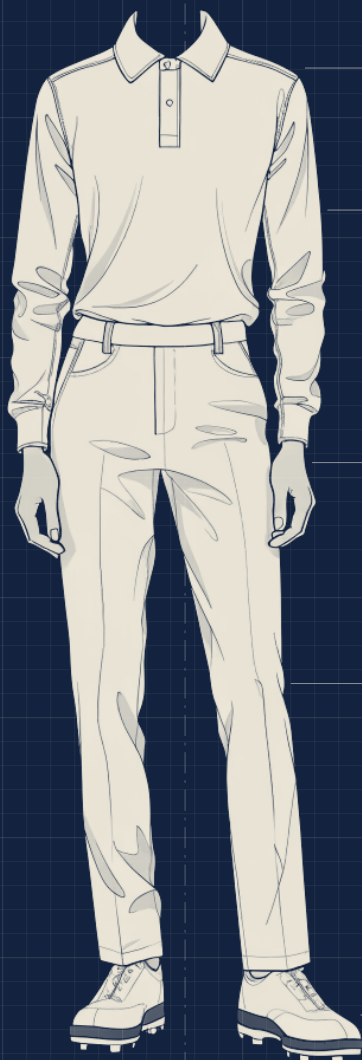
2 THE CADDIE AND THE STAFF

3 YOUR HOST. WATCHING

*Forty-five minutes before the tee.
How you treat the caddie is the read.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE GOLF OUTING

DWG NO.

10

VIEW

ELEVATION

SHEET

2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. UP AND TUCKED
- 2 SHIRT. NO SLOGAN, NO SHOUT
- 3 BELT. WEAR ONE
- 4 TROUSERS. CHECK THE CLUB RULE
- 5 SHOES. SOFT SPIKE ONLY

Check the club's rules before you go.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

Four unstructured hours with somebody who is going to decide something about you, whether either of you says so.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you know the etiquette. Whether you're honest about your score. And above everything else, how you behave when you're playing badly.

WHAT TO WEAR

Collared shirt, tucked. Golf trousers or tailored shorts. Proper golf shoes.

Check the club's rules before you go, and actually check, because plenty of them still ban denim, cargo pockets, athletic shorts, and untucked shirts, and being turned away in the pro shop in front of your host is a bad five minutes. When you can't find out, go tucked and long.

WHAT TO BRING

Your own balls and tees. Cash for the caddie. A hat.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Forty-five minutes before the tee time. Warm up, roll a few putts, get your bearings. Never be the man jogging to the first tee while three other people wait.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Introduce yourself to everyone, including the caddie and the cart staff. Especially them, because your host is watching how you treat people who can't do anything for you.

State your handicap honestly, or say you don't have one, which is a perfectly good answer.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for whatever they raise on the back nine, because that's the thing they wanted to talk about for the whole round and were waiting to bring up. And listen to how they talk about their own business when there's no meeting structure around it. You'll learn more in four hours than in four quarters of calls.

When you speak while walking, never while anyone is over a ball. Silence when a man is addressing his shot is absolute, and breaking it is the single fastest way to mark yourself as somebody who doesn't belong out there.

How you speak conversational, unhurried, curious. It's four hours. The man who fills all of it is exhausting by the seventh hole and unbearable by the twelfth.

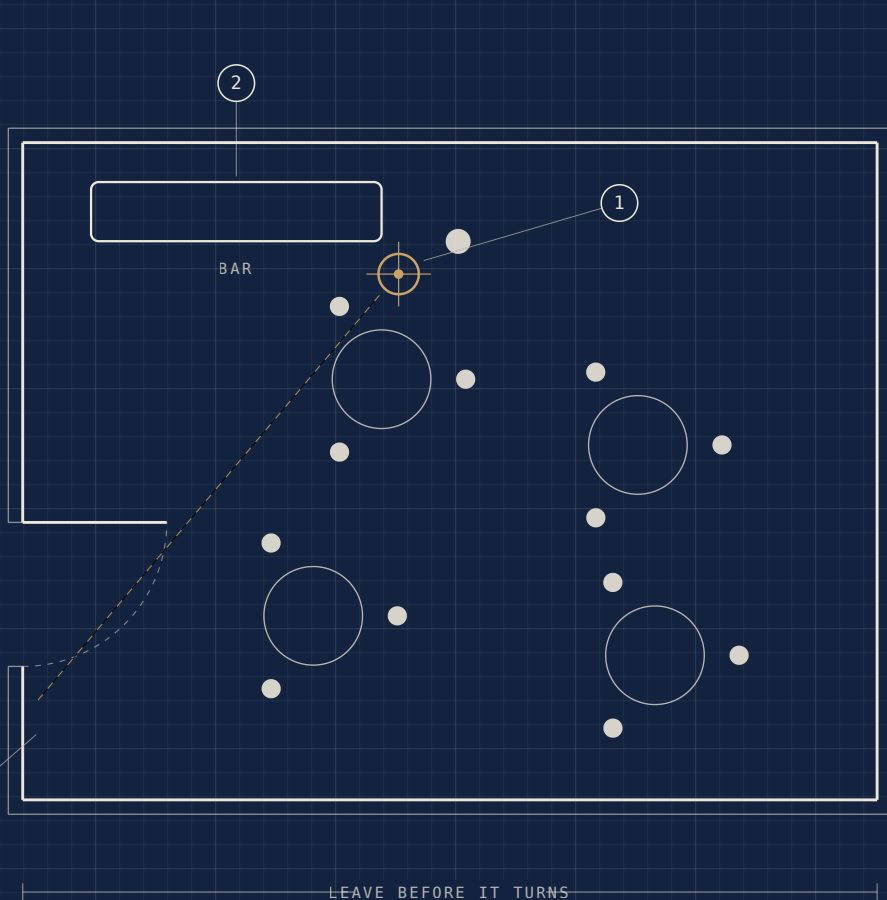
Your body keep pace. Be ready when it's your turn. Rake the bunker, fix your divot, tend the pin, and watch everybody's ball, not just your own. Every bit of it is being read.

The thing you can't fake your temper, and your scorecard. Take the honest number. Somebody is watching and somebody always counts.

THE MISTAKE

Talking business on the front nine. There's a rhythm to it and everyone knows the rhythm except the man who breaks it. Front nine you get to know each other. Back nine, if it comes up, it comes up. Sometimes it's the parking lot.

And nothing you do on that course will be remembered longer than how you handled a bad hole. Nobody cares that you shot 94. They care a great deal about what you did on the fourth green.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE HOLIDAY PARTY

DWG NO.

11

VIEW

PLAN

SHEET

1 OF 2

KEY

1 YOU, EARLY. WITH SOMEONE SENIOR

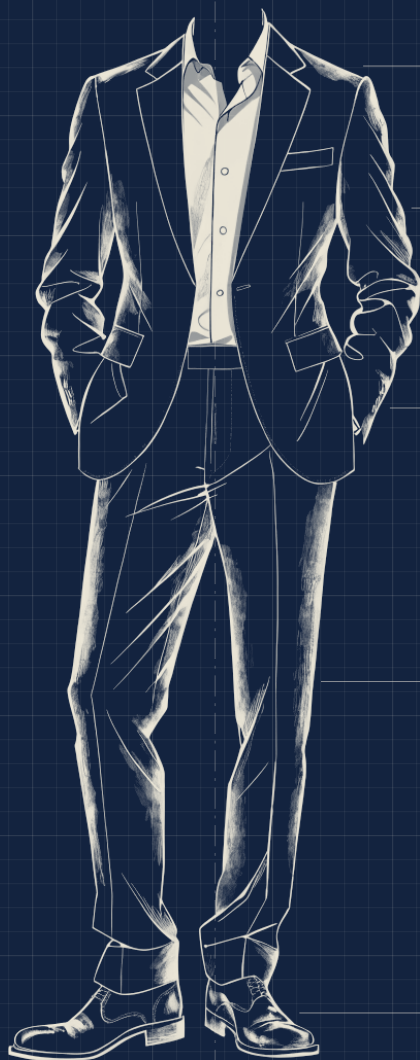
2 THE BAR. YOUR CLOCK

3 THE DOOR. TWENTY MINUTES EARLY

*Five minutes at seven beats
an hour at ten. Then leave.*

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE HOLIDAY PARTY

DWG NO.
11

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. OPEN OR A KNIT TIE
- 2 JACKET. DARK. NOT A COSTUME
- 3 ONE NOTCH OFF THE OFFICE
- 4 TROUSERS. DARK
- 5 SHOES. THE GOOD PAIR

More interesting than the office. Not a costume.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A work event dressed as a social event. It is still a work event.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you know that.

WHAT TO WEAR

A jacket, dark, slightly more interesting than what you wear to the office. A knit tie or no tie. Velvet if you can carry it, and be honest with yourself about whether you can.

More interesting than the office. Not a costume. There's a wide gap between those two and men fall into it every December.

WHAT TO BRING

Nothing. Leave the laptop bag at your desk. Carrying it says you're not really here.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

About an hour after the start time. Never first.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

Find someone senior early, while you're both sober and the room is still quiet enough to hear each other. Five good minutes at 7pm is worth more than an hour at 10pm, and that conversation is the actual reason to attend.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for who's drinking and how fast, because that's your clock. And listen for the senior people starting to leave, because the room becomes a different room within fifteen minutes of the last one going.

When you speak early, and with the people who matter. Nothing said after nine o'clock counts, and by ten nobody will remember what you said at all, only how you were.

How you speak lighter than the office, still recognizably yourself. Do not tell the story you'd tell your friends. Do not give anyone feedback. Do not tell anybody what you really think about anything, including when they ask, and especially when they ask twice.

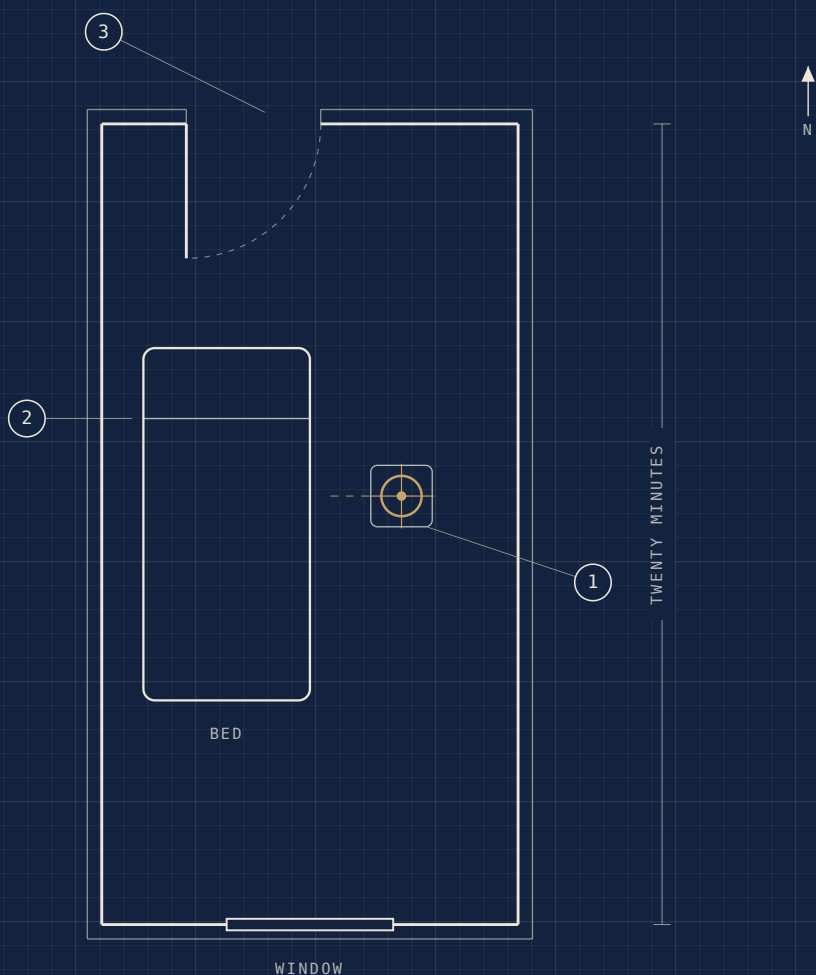
Your body circulate. Twenty minutes with any one group is the ceiling. Hold your drink in your left hand so your right one is dry and warm when somebody puts theirs out.

The thing you can't fake being sober. Whatever your limit is, tonight it's two under it. Every regretted moment at every office party in history happened after the third drink.

THE MISTAKE

Staying past the moment it turns. There is always a moment. Somebody's dancing, somebody's crying, somebody's telling their manager what they really think.

Leave twenty minutes before it. You will always be glad you did and nobody has ever regretted going home early from the office party.



THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE HOSPITAL VISIT

DWG NO.
12

VIEW
PLAN

SHEET
1 OF 2

KEY

1 SIT DOWN. EYE LEVEL

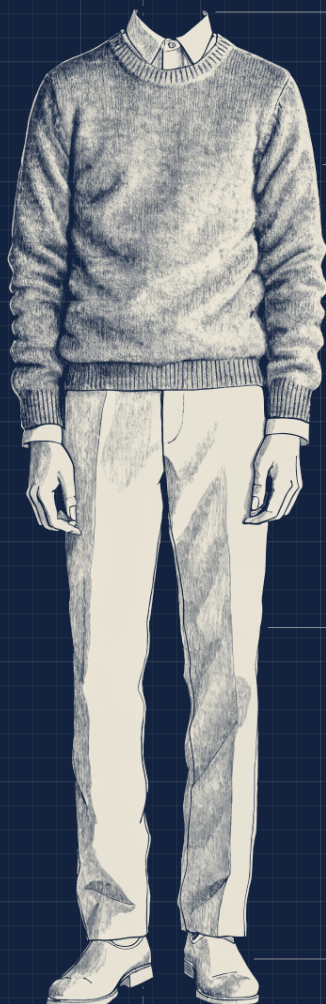
2 DO NOT STAND OVER THE BED

3 DOOR. DO NOT HOVER

Sit down. Twenty minutes.
Silence is not a problem here.

CENTRE LINE

AS WORN



1

2

3

4

5

THE DECORUM STANDARD

THE HOSPITAL VISIT

DWG NO.
12

VIEW
ELEVATION

SHEET
2 OF 2

KEY

- 1 COLLAR. UNDER THE SWEATER
- 2 SWEATER. NOT A SUIT
- 3 NOTHING SCENTED. NOTHING NEW
- 4 TROUSERS. PLAIN
- 5 SHOES. QUIET ON A HARD FLOOR

Nothing scented. Not a suit.

WHAT THE ROOM IS

A room where you are a guest in the worst week of somebody's life.

WHAT THEY'RE READING

Whether you're going to make it about you.

WHAT TO WEAR

Clean, quiet, unremarkable. A collar and a sweater. No cologne, no aftershave, nothing scented at all, because scent is overwhelming in that room and some patients can't tolerate it.

Not a suit. A suit reads like a verdict and you don't want to walk in looking like you came to deliver news.

WHAT TO BRING

Something practical. A long phone charging cable. Real food from outside if they're allowed it. A book or a magazine. Not flowers, because plenty of units don't allow them and now somebody has to solve that problem for you.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Confirm first. Always. Then stay twenty minutes, not an afternoon.

THE FIRST SIXTY SECONDS

I'm not staying long. What do you actually need?

Then be quiet and let them lead the conversation wherever they want it, including nowhere.

HOW TO ACT

Listen for whether they want distraction or acknowledgment, because it's one or the other and it isn't always the one you'd expect. Some men want to talk about the score. Some want to say out loud, once, to somebody who isn't family, that they're frightened. Don't ask which. Offer both and follow whichever they take.

When you speak less than half the time. Silence is not a problem in that room. Your discomfort with it is yours to manage and not theirs to solve.

How you speak normally. Not the soft voice people put on in hospitals. Being spoken to like a patient all day is exhausting, and being spoken to like yourself for twenty minutes is the actual gift you came to give.

Your body sit down. Standing over a bed makes the visit feel like a round. Sit at eye level, and don't hover near the door, because hovering tells them you're counting the minutes.

The thing you can't fake coming back. One visit is a gesture. The second one is what people remember for the rest of their lives, and it's the one almost nobody makes.

THE MISTAKE

Filling the silence, and asking for a prognosis. You're not there to be briefed. You're there to be present, and sitting quietly with someone for fifteen minutes is worth more than every question you could ask.

The eight rules that
hold in every room

- 1 Never wear something for the first time in a room that matters.

- 2 Early is a signal, and it's the cheapest one you'll ever send.

- 3 When you're unsure, go one notch more formal. Never two.

- 4 A jacket can come off. A jacket cannot appear.

- 5 Fit beats price in every room, every time, without exception.

- 6 Say the thing, then stop talking. The silence is not yours to fill.

- 7 Use the person's name once. Once.

- 8 Leave before you want to.

None of this is about clothes.

It's about walking into a room having already decided how you're going to be read, instead of finding out afterward.

That's the whole standard.

DECORUM

How you're read before you speak.