

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO SURVIVE THE OFFICE PICNIC

- 1 Do not enter the picnic alone.**

If you arrive early, wait until you see a group enter, then tag along with the crowd. This reduces the possibility of being forced into conversation with the one or two people already there.
- 2 Lay the groundwork for an early departure.**

Upon arrival, tell your boss a convincing story that would necessitate leaving early. Mention that the sitter has another obligation, that your dog is sick at home alone (whether you have a dog or not), that you have the beginnings of the flu, or another appropriate excuse. Apologize and act sorry that you will not be able to stay longer. Should you decide to escape quickly, your early exit will not seem abrupt.
- 3 Control your alcohol intake.**

You risk embarrassment (or worse) if you get drunk in front of your colleagues. Have no more than one drink at the beginning of the picnic to help you relax, then limit your consumption to one drink per hour. Make sure you eat, too.



Food is a safe topic for company picnic conversation.

4 **Talk about the food.**

If you find yourself stuck with people you don't know (or don't like), discuss the food. It is a common topic for picnic conversation and may lead to discussion of restaurants, travel, and other easy subjects. Other safe topics include the weather, the latest celebrity divorce, television programs, sports, movies, and books. Avoid talking about the physical attractiveness of other employees, the incompetence of managers, the annoying habits of your co-workers, or diseases of any kind.

5 **Avoid discussing work.**

It's best to avoid all topics relating to the company itself, including projects, policies, culture, and co-workers. Alcohol can loosen tongues, and you may not know everyone within earshot, nor their allegiances. Assume that everything you say will be repeated, out of context, to the person you don't want to hear it.

6 **Do not be the first to leave.**

Unless you prepared upon your arrival for an early departure (see step 2), do not be the first person to leave. Wait for two or three other people to go, and depart shortly thereafter. If you observe your boss checking the time as people are leaving, delay your exit for another 15 to 20 minutes.

IF YOU BECOME INTOXICATED

1 **Do not talk to your boss.**

Excuse yourself from any conversations with bosses, managers, or co-workers who might later recount any of your inappropriate comments or behavior.

2 **If you become trapped in a conversation with your boss, become a "Yes man."**

Smile, nod, and find a way out.

3 **Spill something.**

As a last resort, knock your drink over on the table, or spill it on yourself. Then excuse yourself to go wash up. The person or persons you were talking to will move on to another conversation.

4 **Withdraw.**

Find an out-of-the-way tree or park bench. Ask for help from a colleague if you cannot make it on your own, but get out of harm's way before you damage your reputation.

5 **Do not return.**

Take a walk and drink plenty of water. If you cannot sober up, have a colleague tell your boss that you had to leave "because something suddenly came up."

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