

# How to be a social butterfly



**PARTY ANIMALS:**  
We're not all extroverted

**GIVE OFF THE RIGHT SIGNALS:**  
A smile and good posture works wonders



**H**AVE you ever felt just a little envious of the social butterflies in your midst?

Effervescent, engaged and engaging, seemingly possessed of special gifts, they flutter around a party, effortlessly working the room while you stare into the buffet table like a very hungry caterpillar. But are we all born either butterflies or caterpillars, or can we learn skills that allow us to emerge from our cocoons? It is important to understand that we all have two sides to our natures; the introvert and the extrovert.

*One part of our character emerges over the other in different situations, so we may be quiet and introspective, or outgoing and gregarious, depending on the setting.*

Nobody wants a party full of loud show-offs, and remember you've been invited for who you are, but if you want to welcome rather than dread those festive invitations, take heart — as with just a little practice you can build the confidence to make your own social butterfly emerge.

Here are some simple tips to start your wings fluttering gracefully over any social occasion:

## GET COMFORTABLE IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT:

It might sound contrary to natural inclination, but don't be afraid to arrive at the scene a little early.

This gives you the chance to feel comfortable and familiar in the environment. You'll probably have a little time alone with the host, and can be by their side when people start arriving.

Ask the host whether you may

**By Louise Howland**



## INTROVERT: Focus outwards

help, perhaps by getting drinks, food or taking coats — that way you'll be able to meet guests soon after they come through the door while confidently engaged in helpful roles.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE:

It isn't necessary to start a conversation in any brilliant and dazzling manner.

Don't feel you need to memorise opening lines or long anecdotes — a simple "Hi!" accompanied by a friendly smile is enough to make yourself approachable and put other guests at ease.

## BE INTERESTED:

Simply by asking the right questions you can be an excellent conversationalist.

Most people like talking about themselves, but aim for open-ended questions that lead to a sharing of thoughts and experiences, rather than a

barrage that may come across like a police interrogation or job interview.

Elicit information that is a little out of the ordinary and contribute to the responses yourself to make sure you're involved in dialogue, not monologue.

## LISTEN:

As Oscar Wilde once said, too many people have lost the art of conversation but not the power of speech.

Good listeners are all too rare.

*Many people are simply being quiet while they wait for their turn to speak, thinking up what they are going to say next rather than giving the speaker their full attention.*

Worse still, they may be looking over the speaker's shoulder to see whether anyone more attractive is approaching.

## AVOID TABOO SUBJECTS:

Many people love having a rant about religion, sex and politics but unless you're among good friends there is a good chance you might make someone feel uncomfortable or stir up a heated argument.

People have often spent years growing their views, so you are unlikely to change their minds over a Christmas drink!

## GIVE OFF THE RIGHT SIGNALS:

Research shows that up to 80 per cent of communication may occur via body language, so be careful that your body language is adding to your social skills,

not undermining them.

To walk into a room with good posture, smiling, looking around, gives the impression that you are interested, approachable, at ease and confident.

*While nervous people often rush to get what they have to say out as they think they'll be cut off at any moment, confident people tend to speak more slowly, believing that people will listen to them.*

Everyone likes to be around people who are easy-going, naturally sure of themselves and not seen to be trying too hard.

## GIVE RATHER THAN TAKE:

Focus outward.

Most people at the party will be in the same position as you, so by thinking about those around you rather than on yourself you will make things easier for everyone.

If you base your relationships on giving you will be a popular guest.

You can be the butterfly that spreads the pollen for the good of yourself and others.

## BE YOURSELF:

Most importantly, being yourself and being genuine is the best way you can be.

*You are developing the skills to make a braver more sociable version of you, but don't lose sight of the fact that you were invited to the party because people like who you are, so hold your head up high and be proud.*

Confidence is simply courage at ease, so spread your wings and begin to flutter elegantly through the festive season and beyond.

● Louise Howland is the co-creator of game series, *The Art of Conversation* available in six titles, available for €9.99 from Easons.



**GAMES:** The Art of Conversation collection