

What to Expect at a Play Party

A play party is usually a private event, given by someone in their home. They are often held after another more public event, such as a munch. Please remember that there is no guarantee that there will be a party after any event, or that you will be invited if there is. Some people are very generous in opening their homes to others, but never assume that you have an invitation unless you have specifically been invited. If someone says openly, "I'm having people over to my house, all of you are invited," that constitutes an invitation. If you overhear someone saying, "John is having people over later," that does not. If you do overhear that comment, it's inappropriate to either ask the person on whom you've eavesdropped or John himself about it. If you are meant to be invited, someone will let you know.

If you DO have an invitation, remember the rules of politeness your mother hopefully taught you in first grade about birthday parties. It is not your party; you may not invite others without the express prior permission of the host. If you were invited, it likely includes your constant companion, but it does not necessarily include the nice person who sat with you. If it seems to be a large gathering, you may ask the host if they can accompany you, but do so before you mention it to them. If the answer is no, accept it pleasantly and without comment. Unless you know without question that the person you're speaking to is also invited, don't mention it. Don't mention it within earshot of others, not because you're trying to keep things anyone, but because it's rude.

Remember, too, the rest of the rules that your mother hopefully taught you. You're in someone's home, treat it respectfully. Thank them for the invitation. Behave in a way that is likely to get you invited back. If you do bring someone with you, you are responsible for his or her actions. Overindulgence in alcohol or any other substance is inappropriate. Notice I said, "overindulgence." Having a glass or two of wine is one thing, drinking to a point of inebriation is another. If you're unsure of how to behave, watch those around you. Model your behavior after those whom you admire and you're unlikely to go wrong.

If you're fairly new to the community, too, bear in mind that many in the community have had parties over the years, had open houses, have done their share already. They would almost certainly be glad to have new people open their homes as well. Don't feel as though you'd be presumptuous by having a party of your own, though it's often a good idea to sound it out to those who are active in the community. If

you've never hosted a party yourself, don't complain when there aren't parties available to suit you. If you think there should be parties, be the one who opens your home. Doing that a few times will make you appreciate the effort involved in doing so.

When I take anyone new to a play party, I tell them precisely what is expected and allowed, and what is not. I tell them that nudity is likely and that, while respectful admiration from a polite distance is fine, drooling is not. By and large, complimenting the Top on their submissive is usually safe. One does not say, "Your sub has a great ass," one says, "You have such a lovely submissive." I make it clear that they are not to touch anything that does not belong to them, whether it's a thing or a person, without express permission. If you really want to look at those earrings in the light, ask the Top in the relationship if you may touch them, or get close enough for a good look. If the person is wearing the earrings is unaccompanied, ask them directly. If the answer is, "I'm sorry, my Master/Mistress doesn't allow that," accept the information courteously and go on.

Again, don't assume that simply because a person identifies as a submissive, that they are submissive to you unless you have that express relationship and agreement with them. It is inappropriate to expect anyone else to wait on you or defer to you in any way other than what normal courtesy demands. While you may be a Master, you are not master of all you survey. You will garner much more respect by behaving courteously and pleasantly to everyone, regardless of their gender or identification within the community. It is perfectly acceptable, however, to allow someone to get you something if they offer.

It's called a play party because you are likely to see people playing. By and large, those of us who play in public do so because we enjoy it. We are exhibitionists as well as voyeurs. If people are playing, you may watch. You may plop yourself down on the couch, in fact, and watch with rapt attention, and not be considered rude. You will be considered rude if you interrupt the scene except in case of emergency ("Pardon me, the house is on fire..."). Don't talk to the people in the scene unless they speak to you first. Don't talk loudly to your companions. As a guide, behave as though you're watching a performance at a theatre. It's appropriate to lean to the person sitting beside you and whisper something in his or her ear, but it's inappropriate to speak to the actors and/or disturb the performance. If you need to leave the room, do so quietly and wait for a break in the action, if possible. If people seem to want privacy, if they've retreated to a private area, if they've

closed a door, don't intrude. Sexual acts may or may not occur around you or in front of you. Before participating in them yourself with your partner, make sure you know what the house rules are.

There are usually separate areas at a party for socializing and for playing. Please respect those segregations. Don't chatter with your best friend in the play area while others are playing, don't decide that the buffet table is precisely the right height for a spanking bench. If you're a newcomer, it's usually a nice courtesy to ask the host before using equipment. Smoking of cigarettes is usually allowed only outside at most parties. Check with the host if you're unsure, but be prepared for that response.

As you enter a community, too, bear in mind that many of the people around you may have known each other a long time, may have played together, and may have shared intimacies of which you are unaware. There are likely a number of relationship and power dynamics you don't recognize that nonetheless exist. The people you meet may seem to you, as a newcomer, to be very physically intimate with each other, or very casual about physical contact or nudity, particularly when compared to vanilla groups. That is usually an inaccurate perception. Simply because I might be welcome to hug that cute little female submissive, don't assume that you are. Because I have her Master's permission to see her new piercing does not mean you do, too. Perhaps I have her Master's permission because I have known them for a period of time, perhaps I knew the submissive before the Master himself did, perhaps that submissive is sometimes submissive to me as well. Simply because that person may hug me, don't assume that they are comfortable hugging you, too. Allow people to become comfortable around you, recognize that you are a newcomer in an existing community which already has a number of complicated relationships in place.

What you see at parties is a private matter among those who were there, as is the identity of others within the community. It is inappropriate to discuss the party in front of others who were not invited, it is inappropriate to disclose what you may know about those who either attended or hosted it. A trust in your ability to be confidential, to be discreet in terms of what you may see or hear or know will also go a long way towards your acceptance within a community.

If you're unsure what is appropriate at a party, ask. Ask the host of the party, ask someone whom you respect in the community, ask the person(s) involved. And ask

before you commit the faux pas that gives you a reputation as a wannabe or a jerk or a bitch. Reputations can be hard to shake. If you do something that you realize was inappropriate, apologize. The only apology which ever hurts one's reputation is the one that was owed but not spoken or acknowledged.

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Ky_in_munch@hotmail.com

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