

# Very Basic "2-2 Dinner Party" Social Skills

February 25, 2022 | 80 upvotes | by [Red-Curious](#)

---

This one's for all you social auti--s out there. Some of this may seem overly basic, but I can think of at least 7 people off the top of my head who would benefit from at least a few of these - and every one of them is relevant for at least one of those people. I'm sure others are in that same boat, even beyond my 7, so here goes.

Social influence is one of the most valuable domains to keep a mastery on. Over the years I've gotten a number of questions about conversational strategy and social skills, as it's one of my strengths. There's a lot of different sub-groups within the broader category of "social influence," though.

Take cold approaches, for example. [/u/TheChristianAlpha](#) is probably the best I've ever seen at this, in-person. I randomly took him to dinner and half way through he had our waitress sitting at our table in tears as he's telling her how Jesus is the best solution to her life troubles. I thought I was great at cold approaches. He put me to shame.

Then there are group gatherings, professional functions, public events, and the like - all which require unique (though often overlapping) sets of skills, depending on your goals for the situation. Do you just want to have fun? Are you trying to build a relationship with someone in particular? Are you just trying to meet new people, generally? Are you trying to teach someone in your group a personal lesson or model a skill or trait for them? There are all kinds of goals you can have, and those should and will affect how you approach your time.

I have a dinner party with a new couple this weekend, and someone else asked about a similar situation (having another couple over for dinner) recently as well, so I'm going to stick with the dinner party context and assume the goal is simple: make new friends. What I do with that friendship later is a separate goal. For right now let's just make sure things go off without a hitch.

---

## 10 Dinner Party Tips

### 1 - Practice "Mayor Game"

Rather than going in crazy depth here, I'll defer a lot to [Jacktenofhearts' comment here](#). Obviously it's a bit different because a two-couple dinner party is not a mass social outing. But in our context it will mean engaging in small talk, even if you don't care what it is. This small talk will be filtered throughout the evening between larger topics, which we'll get to later. **The utility of your mayor game here is to make people *feel* like they're having a good time** through subtle (or, on lesser occasion, overt) supportive gestures rather than trying to push an agenda for yourself. You are pushing your own agenda: "make new friends" and "advance my social network." The mayor benefits from mayor game. But he does it in a way that looks like you're the one benefiting from him. That's why he's so doggone popular.

### 2 - Don't Dominate

Yeah, I know all you alpha-wannabes think dominating is everything. Domination is a tool. 2-2 dinner dates where you're just trying to build rapport with someone aren't necessarily the best situation for that tool. Domination is great for building sexual attraction with women or respect from men in male-only spaces, but when you put yourself in front of another married couple, the dynamic needs shift away from brute domination toward charm. Mayor game is also highly relevant here.

The mayor isn't dominating the conversation. He's its catalyst. I like to think of my conversational style at 2-2 dinner parties as if I'm pushing one of my kids on a swing. They're the one on the swing, not me. It's

not about me. At first, I may have to push several times to get her going, some hard pushes even. But once she's got momentum, it's just a few light taps here and there to keep her from slowing down. If I look away too long and she slows down too much, I push hard again, but it only takes one good push that time. In the end, my daughter had a great time and I didn't have to do much. She gets off the swing and is smitten with what a great time she had with me.

### **3 - Don't expect help**

If I insisted that I be the one on the swing (i.e. dominated the activity) and that they should be priming the conversation for me to enjoy, I'll end up sorely disappointed. Why? Because my 4yr old isn't strong enough to push me on the swing. Even my 10yr old couldn't push me very high. I'm the strong one, not them. Your dinner guests may actually be better conversationalists than you - and if so, that's great. But don't expect it. I used to expect it and it backfired often. Go in expecting that they are conversationally weak and immature. You will be less disappointed and more on your game that way.

### **4 - Use your wife**

She's there to help. Let her help. If she is sidelined in the conversation, (a) she's going to be upset afterward because of your crappy leadership, and why bring those tests and burdens on yourself? But more significantly: (b) your guests will notice and it will affect how they feel about YOU. They came to see both of you, not just you (in most cases). One of my common strategies is the "Have you met Ted?" play from *How I Met Your Mother*. I introduce a topic, put my wife on the spot (sometimes awkwardly, for hilarity) and say, "You've got a good story on that, babe. Why don't you tell them?" (if I know she actually does) or, "Honey, what do you think of that?" (if I'm being more general). This form of enabling someone else in the conversation is the best way to play mayor game in small settings, priming conversations without dominating them.

### **5 - Ask lots of questions**

The goal is getting to know them and building a relationship. Excellent. Best way to do that is to speak with other people on their terms about things they enjoy. If they, on their own, raise a topic of interest to you, by all means: engage. Share your own thoughts. But always end what you say with a question. Whenever you talk, you should finish your portion of the conversation in one of two ways:

- You slowed down your speech enough, winding down your thought, that they cut you off with their own thoughts (**ideal**)
- They didn't cut you off, so you ask a question to pass the ball

### **6 - Avoid Awkward Silences**

If you finish talking and one of the two above things hasn't happened, the ball is still in your hands. More accurately: the ball is rolling around on the floor without anyone picking it up, and because you're the last one who had it, it's your fumble. If it's not a natural transfer, asking a question passes it. Even if no one answers, instead of you fumbling, it's them failing to catch it. Sure, it can still be a bad pass if you asked a dumb question, but something is better than nothing. Without a question, you haven't passed the ball. It's still your ball.

They may break the awkward silence and steal it from you, but then the impression is: "This is boring. He's just holding the ball. I don't like boring, so I'll grab it and do something." To be fair, I *LOVE* awkward silences. They're great learning and teaching tools. But not when my goal is to get to know someone or build a relationship. Awkward silences are better when you're leading a workshop/teaching a class/giving a lecture/etc. Use the right tool in the right context. A first dinner party is not the proper context for the awkward silence tool.

## 7 - One Big Topic, One Backup

Not 5. Not 0. One or two. Your guests may have big topics too, but (per no. 3) don't expect their help. Big topics are things you know *the group* can spend 30+ minutes talking about before changing subjects again. This is hardest with new people. If I were chatting with one of you all, I know I can bring up anything red pill and we can go off for a while. With someone like [/u/praexology](#), I can mention the topic of behavioral study and we're good for 30+ minutes. With my friend Ryan, it's home repair. With John, it's church discipleship. Big topics must be something you're either fluent in, or where you can fake fluency reasonably well. Ideally, your big topic will be something personally relevant for them. For example, if the person's dad is dying of cancer, ask about that and let that spawn big-topic ideas for conversation.

If you are really struggling for big topic ideas, just ask yourself, "What is everyone on the internet posting about?" If it's Ukraine/Russia, you can go with that. If it's some new BLM outrage, use that one. If it's a celebrity doing something absurd, that's another. The pop-event is not the topic. The philosophical questions and issues the event raises are your big topic.

Example: With Ukraine/Russia, I'd be asking questions like:

- Countries used to war all the time, but our wars lately have been against small factions, not whole nations. Have we really evolved as a people or did we just become complacent in a few decades of general world peace?
- To what extent should we, as individual citizens third party to what's going on, actually get concerned with political issues like this?
- Should the US intervene at all? Or is it better to let other nations figure out their own problems?

Notice how these are all questions. You will have opportunity to share your views, but not until after you let them share theirs first. The reason is no. 8, below.

The goal of your "one big topic" is to make the other people feel like you actually discussed something of substance rather than lots of small talk before going home. **You need the small-talk too.** Small-talk matters, especially when it's, "What's been going on in your life lately?" Showing them that you actually care about who they are and what they're experiencing matters. If you only care about their opinions on subjects, but not their own life experience, you will have an obvious gaping hole in the "get to know you" aspect of the relationship. But don't neglect the big-issues that will drive conversation through the evening too.

Put another way: small-talk lets you know what's happening in their life. Big topics let you know who they are as people. How you handle the "big topic" and which topic you selected is vital to them feeling like a relationship is being built. That's the topic that will make them go home and think, "We really got to know them." Without a big topic they will think on the drive home, "That was decent chit chat" and they won't give you a second thought.

## 8 - Read the Room

The first 20 minutes your guests are over are the prime opportunity to assess who they are. You'll be able to tell if the guy is passive or dominant. You can figure out if the wife runs the show or if she's a biblical helper. You can assess whether they are neat or sloppy. You'll pick up things about their lingo and style of speech. You'll figure out if they're socially competent or inept. Most importantly, you can use all of this information to assess what's safe to discuss and not. Trying to red knight the new co-worker and his wife on the first dinner date you have with him is ... not smart.

Remember, you have a goal: build a relationship/get to know them. Saying something that completely

offends them is counter-productive to that goal, even if it happens to be true. *AFTER* the relationship is well-established, you will have room to say offensive/unsafe things and they won't care. But if they're at all like 99% of the world, you will not be given that level of respect up-front. You'll have to gauge their body language, facial expressions, times when they forcibly derail the conversation (especially if it's unnatural to the natural flow).

Another big aspect of reading the room is gauging how well they're responding to the things you're saying and doing. The reason you often want to ask questions about their views before sharing your own is not only because it (a) creates the trust necessary to get away with sharing some of your more "unpopular" views and opinions, but also (b) gives you valuable information about where they're coming from so you can present your "unpopular" views and opinions in a more palatable way, without compromising your goals for the evening. If while you're reading the room you notice that you're cutting them off more than they're cutting you off, you're not asking enough questions and they're going to *feeeeel* disengaged with the conversation, even if they are actually engaging. From there, part of reading the room also means ...

## **9 - Avoid Taboo Topics**

... until the relationship/respect is established well-enough that you know you can pull it off. I've already hinted at this, so I won't go too much more in-depth here. Suffice it to say: power-playing a taboo topic just to see how someone responds is fun. It's a useful skill to have. But as with awkward silences, taboo topics are the wrong tool for early-stage "get to know you" dinners.

## **10 - Think Beyond the Conversation**

Are their glasses empty? Ask if they need more to drink. Did they eat everything on their plate? Maybe it wasn't enough and they want more, but are too "courteous" to get seconds without it being offered. Are they stretching their backs a lot? Maybe it's time to move from the table to the couch. Pay attention to the non-conversational aspects of what's going on in order to be a good host. This form of hospitality will be essential in leaving a good impression. Good first impressions earn influence later.

Women are GREAT at this. But if your wife is the only one doing it, you'll end up in dynamics like I used to be in years ago, where people would think, "We really like her, but R-C is weird." They have to see the leader/helper dynamic between the two of you as a healthy interplay, not as distinct functions. Lead by example in this way. Maybe you offer to refill their cup, but your wife stands up and says, "Oh yeah, I can get that." You led with the insight that they may be thirsty, she helped do the actual work of getting their drinks. If your wife picks up on something like that, play the, "Oh yeah, that reminds me" card and pick something else to lead into, like, "I might want to grab some seconds. Any of you want some while I'm up?" or "Now's probably a good time to pull out dessert anyway."

Activities are a great way to go beyond the conversation too - especially if the guy seems disengaged and his wife is doing all the talking. Most men prefer to **do** rather than talk. My wife and I are big on board games. We keep an assortment that are both complex and easy, so if there's ever a lull in conversation, we have an option for anyone - other board-gamers or people who just want to play a round of euchre. Lots of times the board game collection is even the context for inviting someone over, "Oh, we should totally do a game night!" 75% of the time when we schedule these game nights we never actually play any board games because conversation is great and it doesn't go there. But we're always ready. Other activity ideas could be

- Going on a walk around your neighborhood
- I know some of the guys around here like to use video games. I personally avoid this, as I'm not a huge video-gamer in the first place. But if there's something unique, like my son's VR, that can be a lot of fun. Party games on a TV/game system can also be useful.

- Sometimes I like to have my guests, when they're over, actually help with some aspect of the cooking. This is a bit riskier, but cooking new and interesting dishes is already a hobby of mine, so it's a small way to invite someone else into a world where I am competent enough to carry the activity while still making them feel engaged without an actual burden.

---

Archived from [theredarchive.com](http://theredarchive.com)

---

## Comments

---

SteelSharpensSteel • 9 points • 26 February, 2022 02:01 AM

I will just add that people won't remember what you say, but they sure as hell will remember how you make them feel.

Red-Curious[S] • 2 points • 26 February, 2022 02:19 AM

I agree in principle. But people have also quoted me 3 times this week without me even realizing I was the one who said it. So, sometimes people remember things you say too :p

SteelSharpensSteel • 3 points • 26 February, 2022 02:25 AM

Your post reminded me of the time my wife and I met a new couple. I heard the guy was from Wisconsin, so I offered him a old fashioned. I have never seen someone light up so fast. He and I are friends now.

Red-Curious[S] • 2 points • 26 February, 2022 04:11 AM

That's a Wisconsin thing? My brother and I do those here too. Good stuff.

Praexology • 21 points • 26 February, 2022 12:21 AM

Mayor Game Tricks:

- 1) Always Be Wingmanning
- 2) Throw tempered game at ugly, fat and old women. Train them to approach you.
- 3) Don't budget at the party. If you have to fight the waitress over a \$5 mystery fee you should have rejected the invitation. Don't look at the cost, you should have already budgeted for it.
- 4) Enthusiasm goes a long way.
- 5) Initiate plans
- 6) If you suck at telling stories, don't. Get someone to teach you how.
- 7) For parties over 5 aim to be the second most energetic person.
- 8) People love talking taboo topics. Facilitate them without disagreeing.
- 9) View your conversation as a gift to others. Remember: people don't care what you talk about but rather how you made them feel.

laserdicks • 4 points • 25 February, 2022 10:33 PM

Excellent write-up. Cohesive, and packaged up ready to digest. Super practical too.

Thank you!

DylanKleb0ld • 3 points • 26 February, 2022 03:04 PM

This is some raw Peruvian uncut quality post

SpinelessChump • 1 point • 26 February, 2022 02:57 PM

Gold, thanks dude.

IveRedditAllNight • 1 point • 26 February, 2022 05:17 PM

Wow. Legendary post here. Number 7 helped me so much. Those concepts evaded me forever. Now I have such clarity and feel that I can have a conversation with anyone about anything!

bogeyd6 • 1 point • 27 February, 2022 01:49 PM

Use your wife

Trust me, she is far better at socializing than you will ever be. Women are born for this role and excel at it. We place value on femininity as well as masculinity. The reason is because we are different and it doesn't make the other less. My wife can work a room in ways that I can only dream and at the end of the night you will be complimented and accepted.

P.S. Red-Curious is still a beta

red-sfpplus • 1 point • 28 February, 2022 03:58 PM

All great stuff. But if I want to hang out with other couples, it happens in public. I dont host parties at my home, even when it was 8000 sq feet.

Charlie\_Crews • 1 point • 15 March, 2022 11:36 PM

Can you elaborate on as to why not host parties at home?

red-sfpplus • 1 point • 16 March, 2022 12:18 AM

Sure, just like I can elaborate on why I only wipe my ass with dude wipes.

Charlie\_Crews • 1 point • 16 March, 2022 12:34 PM

Thank you for your time

[deleted] 8 March, 2022 05:46 PM

[permanently deleted]

Red-Curious[S] • 1 point • 8 March, 2022 06:02 PM

Hah. I'm so confused.