

Best Practices for the Happy Hour Interview

What to wear, what to drink and when to call it a night.

By Karl Rozemeyer

Meeting for cocktails is different from meeting for coffee or over lunch. The expectation is that you will meet in the evening and the situation will be less formal than the office — but not too informal. “When you meet for cocktails, you are not going to a bar, you are not going to a club,” said actress Deidrie Henry, who this year appeared on television in “Three Rivers,” “Southland” and “Lie To Me” and will soon be seen in the feature film “Beautiful Boy.” “You know what you are walking into on some level. It is a matter of what sort of image you want them to walk away with, and how do you want to be perceived.”

Dressing for the occasion

Dress thoughtfully. For women, choices are greater but need to be made with care. “Women do have a fine line to tread,” said Kelly Dingee, a sourcing researcher and executive trainer for AIRS, an executive search firm, “but I think there is enough women’s wear that converts from office situations so there are plenty of selections.

“Obviously you shouldn’t be dressed like you are going on a date. I wouldn’t wear anything that I would wear out with my husband or maybe with my girlfriends if we were going out for a good time at night. I would tone it down just a little bit if it were for a [job](#) meeting. Be a little more conscious of necklines and colors.” Brown-Volkman advised women to wear a dress with a jacket.

Selecting a drink

A beer? A glass of wine? A Rusty Nail? “Some would probably get whatever their host gets,” Dingee observed. “I tend to order what I am most comfortable with, so I will almost always order a glass of wine in those situations. If there is a fairly casual crowd and most are going to order a beer, I might order a beer. My boss would probably order whisky straight. Whatever you select is part of your personality — as long as you don’t overindulge.”

One-drink *maximum*

“Whenever it is a business situation, I have a one-drink rule. Two drinks is the maximum,” said Dingee, who as a former [recruiter](#) once received a [job-search](#) expense reports in which a candidate ordered in excess of 10 drinks at one sitting. “That sends off some red flags. You want to be sociable, but you don’t want to treat it like it’s your local frat party. Nurse one drink or have a club soda if you decide to move onto a second drink.