

3 steps to surviving lunch with an executive



A lunch invitation from an executive or other senior colleague can be a nerve-wracking experience, but it's also a great opportunity to connect with and impress someone who could have a major effect on your career.

Self-improvement guru Molly Ford explains what you should do before, during and after the meal to help make the most of such an opportunity:

- 1. Before the meal, come up with conversation Cliffs Notes.** Fill your head with answers to questions that might come your way during lunch. "I can almost guarantee he'll ask you about your career goals or where you see yourself in five years, so have an honest and thoughtful answer ready," Ford writes. You also may get questions about your work history, ideas for the company and where you grew up. You should also prepare some questions to ask the executive. "Do some premeeting research on his background and tailor your questions so they're relevant to his specific experience. Not only will you look more prepared, you'll definitely have a more productive and interesting conversation with him."
- 2. Dress and dine to impress.** On the day of the lunch, make sure you look polished and are dressed on the nice end of the spectrum that's normal for your office. Leave your phone in your purse or pocket, and mind your table manners. "Also, it's always important to be respectful of time constraints, but this is especially true in a situation where the other person is more senior than you. So be on time to the meal, watch for his cues for when it's time to leave, and don't order an appetizer or dessert unless he does first."
- 3. Nail the follow-up.** Thank the executive twice—once in person at the end of lunch and once with a short email later in the day. "I always like to reiterate some interesting part of the conversation in follow-up emails, e.g., 'I so enjoyed your story of your first job and grad school professor'—something to personalize your interaction and show you were paying attention. This is also a great chance to remind him how excited you are to work for his company and be part of the team."

— Adapted from "[Networking Up: How to Handle Lunch with a CEO](#)," Molly Ford, *The Daily Muse*.