

Diplomatic Protocol Made Simple

Awareness Session for Non-Diplomatic Staff

Lead Presenter: Ms. Desreine Taylor, Director of Protocol

Jamaican Foreign Service Institute | 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

What We Will Cover Today

01	Why Protocol Matters	5 min
02	Greetings & Forms of Salutation	10 min
03	Body Language & Non-Verbal Cues	5 min
04	Table of Precedence	10 min
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Why Protocol Matters

"Diplomatic protocol is the internationally recognised system of rules, customs and courtesies that govern the conduct of relations among states."

It represents Jamaica — every interaction reflects our values

It prevents offence — wrong title, wrong seat, wrong tone

It builds trust — professional conduct builds confidence

It is a working tool — used every time you greet or host

Greetings & Introductions — The DOs

- ✓ Always use formal title — never first names
- ✓ Wait for the dignitary to extend their hand first
- ✓ Maintain steady eye contact throughout
- ✓ Introduce the junior person TO the senior person
- ✓ Stand when a senior dignitary enters the room

Greetings & Introductions — The DON'Ts

- ✗ Do NOT use first names — even if you know them socially
- ✗ Do NOT initiate hugs, backslaps, or fist bumps
- ✗ Do NOT turn your back when leaving their presence
- ✗ Do NOT check your phone while with a dignitary
- ✗ Do NOT speak across a senior dignitary to greet someone junior

Forms of Salutation — Quick Reference

Title / Position	Spoken Address	Written Address
Ambassador / High Commissioner	Your Excellency	<i>H.E. [Full Name]</i>
Governor-General	Your Excellency	<i>H.E. The Most Hon.</i>
Prime Minister	Prime Minister [Name]	<i>[Name]</i> <i>The Most Hon.</i> <i>[Name]</i>
Cabinet Minister	Honourable Minister	<i>The Hon. [Name]</i>
Chargé d'Affaires	Mr / Ms [Surname]	<i>Mr / Ms [Full Name]</i>
Consul General	Mr / Ms [Surname]	<i>Consul General</i> <i>[Name]</i>
Honorary Consul	Honorary Consul [Name]	<i>Honorary Consul [Name]</i>

Body Language & Non-Verbal Protocol

Over 60% of the impression you make comes before you say a word.

- ▶ Stand upright — slouching conveys disinterest and disrespect
- ▶ Keep arms uncrossed — signals openness and confidence
- ▶ Maintain 1–1.5 metres — do not crowd a dignitary
- ▶ Do not cluster around them — position with purpose
- ▶ Silence your phone completely — vibrations are audible

Table of Precedence — Jamaica's Official Order

Precedence = who is greeted first · who sits where · who speaks when

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Governor-General |
| 2 | Prime Minister |
| 3 | President of the Senate |
| 4 | Speaker of the House of Representatives |
| 5 | Chief Justice |
| 6 | Leader of the Opposition |
| 7 | Cabinet Ministers |
| 8 | Ambassadors & High Commissioners (by date of accreditation) |
| 9 | Senators & Members of Parliament |

Precedence in Practice

At Official Meetings

Host and most senior guest face each other across the table

Delegations sit on their own side — leads at the centre

Junior staff do not speak until invited to do so

At Official Functions

Most senior guest sits to the host's RIGHT

Second most senior sits to the host's LEFT

Host always proposes the first toast

Hosting Dignitaries — Prepare First

Nothing at an official visit should be improvised. The 48-hour rule is non-negotiable.

1. Confirm the visitor's title and exact form of address
2. Brief ALL staff who may encounter the dignitary
3. Designate ONE person who owns logistics end-to-end
4. Prepare a written programme — share with the Mission 48 hrs ahead
5. Confirm dietary requirements, allergies, and religious observances

Common Mistakes — What Not to Do

- ✗ Wrong title on a place card or correspondence
- ✗ Serving food that conflicts with dietary requirements
- ✗ Leaving a dignitary waiting without senior cover
- ✗ Photographing an official without prior consent
- ✗ Improvising any element of an official event

The Dignitary Visit Checklist — Preparation

48+ Hours Before

- ☐ Confirm name, title & form of address
- ☐ Circulate visit brief to ALL staff
- ☐ Confirm dietary requirements & allergies
- ☐ Finalise place cards — senior review
- ☐ Confirm written programme with Mission

Day Before

- ☐ Set up and inspect meeting room
- ☐ Confirm refreshment arrangements
- ☐ Check flag positioning
- ☐ Brief reception and security staff
- ☐ Confirm transport and parking

The Dignitary Visit Checklist — Day Of Visit

Day Of Visit — The Non-Negotiables

- ☐ Host arrives 20 minutes early
- ☐ Escort team at the entry point
- ☐ All phones on silent — no exceptions
- ☐ 'Your Excellency, welcome to [Ministry]'
- ☐ Thank-you note within 24 hours

Never let the dignitary arrive first. Use those 20 minutes to confirm all arrangements and brief the escort.

The escort must know the dignitary's name, title, the full programme, and be ready to greet them formally on arrival.

Not vibrate- silent. Brief all staff before the visit. A buzzing phone in a formal setting is audible and disrespectful.

Short, warm, formal. Practise it beforehand. The greeting is the first moment of the visit — get it right.

Handwritten on official stationery for very senior visitors. Formal typed letter for others. Finish the visit professionally.

Diplomatic Gifts — The Key Rules

"A poorly chosen gift causes more diplomatic damage than no gift at all."

- ▶ Modest, authentic Jamaican gifts are always well-received
- ▶ Present at the end of the meeting — not at the start
- ▶ Use both hands when presenting — wrap the gift neatly
- ▶ Know cultural prohibitions: no alcohol, no clocks, no fours
- ▶ When in doubt — do not give

Jamaica's Presence Abroad — Key Missions

Jamaica's diplomatic network extends to over 70 countries

City / Country	Mission
Washington D.C. ,USA	Embassy of Jamaica
London, UK	Jamaica High Commission
Ottawa, Canada	Jamaica High Commission
New York	Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Geneva	Permanent Mission UN (WTO / UNCTAD)
Brussels, Belgium	Mission to the European Union
Tokyo, Japan	Embassy of Jamaica
Beijing, China	Embassy of Jamaica
Port of Spain, T&T	Jamaica High Commission
Mexico City, Mexico	Embassy of Jamaica

Jamaica's Missions Abroad — What They Do

Political

Missions represent Jamaica's interests in bilateral and multilateral forums — reporting on developments in their host country and advancing Jamaica's foreign policy positions.

Economic

Missions promote Jamaica's trade, investment, and tourism interests — supporting Jamaican businesses abroad and attracting foreign investment to Jamaica.

Consular

Missions issue passports and visas, assist Jamaicans in distress abroad, liaise with local authorities, and provide emergency support to Jamaican nationals.

Cultural

Missions promote Jamaican culture, heritage, and values — organising national day events, engaging the diaspora community, and representing Brand Jamaica internationally.

Honorary Consuls — Jamaica's Extended Reach

Private citizens appointed by Jamaica — not career diplomats

- ▶ Address as 'Honorary Consul [Surname]' — not 'Your Excellency'
- ▶ Serve in cities where Jamaica has no resident Mission
- ▶ They assist Jamaicans in distress and promote trade interests
- ▶ They cannot issue passports
- ▶ They serve at their own cost — treat them with genuine appreciation

Dress Code at Official Engagements

When in doubt — dress up, not down. Your appearance communicates respect.

White Tie

State Banquets · Heads of State receptions

Black Tie

Official Dinners · Formal diplomatic receptions

Lounge Suit / Smart Formal

Official meetings · National day receptions

Smart Business

Working meetings · Seminars · Training sessions

Real-World Examples — Protocol Done Right

Official Visit — Minister of Government

Motorcade met at entry by host delegation only. All staff briefed the day before. Seating confirmed 48hrs hours ahead. Programme shared with Mission a week prior. Thank-you letter dispatched within 24 hours.

Key Lesson: The 48-hour rule and post-visit follow-up are hallmarks of professionalism.

Official Luncheon — Six Ambassadors

Host arrives 20 minutes early. Most senior Ambassador seated to the right. Dietary requirements confirmed a week ahead. Host proposes first toast. Junior staff serve — do not converse uninvited.

Key Lesson: Preparation, precedence, and poise — the three P's of diplomatic dining.

Honorary Consul Visit to HQ

Honorary Consul from Oslo received by the Permanent Secretary in person. Welcome note on the table. Visit brief reviewed in advance. Blue Mountain Coffee presented at the close.

Key Lesson: Small gestures carry large weight. They remember how you made them feel.

Role Play — What Would You Do?

01

The Unannounced Ambassador

An Ambassador arrives unannounced at Reception asking to see the PS. The PS cannot be interrupted. What do you do?

02

The Luncheon Mix-Up

20 minutes before five Ambassadors arrive for lunch, you find the place cards read 'Minister' instead of 'Your Excellency'. What is your immediate priority?

03

The Gift Dilemma

15 minutes before a bilateral meeting, a senior official asks you to find 'something nice' for the visiting High Commissioner. What do you do?

Key Takeaways — Apply These Today

01

Every interaction with a dignitary is on behalf of Jamaica

03

Precedence governs seating, greeting, speaking - never improvise it

05

Brief every staff member — everyone is part of the protocol chain

07

Dress for the occasion — when in doubt, dress up not down

09

Body language speaks first — posture,

02

'Your Excellency' for Ambassadors — always safe, never wrong

04

Confirm everything in writing, at least 48 hours before any visit

06

Gifts: modest, Jamaican, culturally appropriate — when in doubt, skip it

08

Honorary Consuls deserve the same courtesy as career diplomats

10

Protocol done well is invisible — make

Questions & Discussion

"You don't need to be a diplomat to behave diplomatically."

— **Ambassador Sharon Saunders**

Jamaican Foreign Service Institute

Thank you for your engagement and participation.