

高校英语专业阅读教程

ENGLISH EXTENSIVE READING (高级)

主编 刘丽芳 程明 魏金玲

主审 楼中梁



高校英语专业阅读教程

GAO XIAO YING YU ZHUAN YE YUEDU JIAOCHENG

(高级)

主编 刘丽芳 程明 魏金玲
主审 楼中梁

哈尔滨地图出版社

• 哈尔滨 •

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

高校英语专业阅读教程. 高级/刘丽芳, 程明, 魏金玲主编. —哈尔滨: 哈尔滨地图出版社, 2006.6

ISBN 7-80717-371-8

I. 高... II. ①刘...②程...③魏... III. 英语—阅读教学—高等学校—教材 IV. H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2006) 第 062333 号

哈尔滨地图出版社出版发行

(地址: 哈尔滨市南岗区测绘路 2 号 邮编: 150086)

哈尔滨博浩外贸彩印有限责任公司印刷

开本: 787 mm×1 092 mm 1/16 总印张: 24 总字数: 600 千字

2006 年 6 月第 1 版 2006 年 6 月第 1 次印刷

印数: 1~500 总定价: 60.00 元

编写原则及使用说明

本教材为《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》，供高校本科英语专业学生使用。

本册书共 10 个单元 20 课，供高校英语专业本科学生二年级一个学期使用。

一、《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》全面贯彻《大学英语教学大纲》【修订版】的要求

大纲明确规定：“培养学生具有较强的阅读能力和一定的听、说、读、写、译能力，使他们能用英语进行流利的交流。”《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》始终把阅读能力的培养放在首位。阅读不仅是语言输入的主要来源，也是听、说、读、写、译等其它技能发展的基础和源头，没有足够的语言输入，其它技能的发展与提高也是有限的。调查显示，阅读能力是大部分英语专业学生今后使用英语的主要技能。

二、《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》的选材

《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》针对高校英语专业本科学生。在选材上注重趣味性、信息性、可思性、时代性和前瞻性，题材广泛，内容丰富，主要涉及语言、文化、习俗、伦理、信息、科学、社会焦点等等。

每一个单元侧重于讨论一个话题，但两篇课文的体裁却不尽相同，体现文体的多样性。课文绝大部分选自 21 世纪初期出版的英美报刊书籍和作品。为配合教学需要，对选材的部分内容进行了删改。《高校英语专业阅读教程》(高级)每课词汇量大约在 2000~2500 字，重点培养不同年级学生的阅读能力。

三、《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》(高级)的主要内容

《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》(高级)中每课由 Section A, Section B 构成。每部分包含一篇课文和相关的练习。Section A 主要是为了在课堂上训练学生的阅读能力和理解能力，老师可参照不同的学生阅读水平，选取不同的阅读内容进行教学。Section B 主要供学生课后进行阅读训练。该部分内容较难，词汇量较大，学生课参照课文注释及相关资料进行阅读。教师在上课时进行必要的检查。

四、鸣谢

本册教程在编写的过程中得到了哈尔滨师范大学外语学院刘丽芳老师、程明老师和哈尔滨职业技术学院魏金玲老师的大力帮助。其中刘丽芳老师撰写了 12 万字，程明老师撰写了 11 万字，魏金玲老师撰写了 10 万字。双鸭山市劳动与社会保障局楼中梁局长对本册教程进行了审阅。黑龙江司法警官职业技术学院钱英军老师、黑河莱恩英语学校张宝祥校长参加了全套书的编撰工作。

五、《高校英语专业英语阅读教程》系黑龙江省教育厅 2006 年度人文社会科学研究项目基金资助。项目编号：11514135。

目 录

Unit One	
Section A	Language and Thought..... 1
Section B	Party Politics..... 9
Unit Two	
Section A	Human Gene Therapy..... 17
Section B	The New Singles..... 27
Unit Three	
Section A	The Gift of the Magi..... 38
Section B	Are Your Kids at Risk of Computer Violence?..... 46
Unit Four	
Section A	Hop-Frog..... 53
Section B	The Cultural Patterning of Space..... 64
Unit Five	
Section A	Niagara Falls..... 71
Section B	Can You Raise a Polite Kid in This Rude World..... 78
Unit Six	
Section A	Of the Origin and Use of Money..... 87
Section B	A Son's Restless Journey..... 96
Unit Seven	
Section A	A Free Man's Worship..... 104
Section B	Gender Roles in Cross-Cultural Contexts..... 115
Unit Eight	
Section A	Tendency of Varieties of Original Type..... 122
Section B	Animal Emotion..... 135
Unit Nine	
Section A	My Race Problem and Ours..... 145
Section B	Is Science Dangerous?..... 162
Unit Ten	
Section A	Why Catholics Like Einstein..... 171
Section B	What American Teens Really Want..... 185
Vocabulary..... 194	
Reference Answers To the Texts..... 224	

Unit One

Section A

Language and Thought

A symbol is not the same thing as a sign; that is a fact that psychologists and philosophers often overlook. All intelligent animals use signs, so do we. To them as well as to us sounds and smells and motions are signs of food, danger, the presence of other beings, or of rain or storm. Furthermore, some animals not only attend to signs but produce them for the benefit of others. Dogs bark at the door to be let in; rabbits thump to call each other; the cooing of doves and the growl of a wolf defending his kill are unequivocal signs of feelings and intentions to be reckoned with by other creatures.

We use signs just as animals do, though with considerably more elaboration. We stop at red lights and go on green; we answer calls and bells, watch the sky for coming storms, read trouble or promise or anger in each other eyes. That is animal intelligence raised to the human level. Those of us who are dog lovers can probably all tell wonderful stories of how of clever sign interpretation and sign using. How our dogs have sometimes risen in the scale.

A sign is anything that announces the existence or the imminence of some event, the presence of a thing or a person, or a change in the state of affairs. There are signs of the weather, signs of danger, signs of future good or evil, signs of what the past has been. In every case a sign is closely bound up with something to be noted or expected in experience. It is always a part of the situation to which it refers, though the reference may be remote in space and time. In so far as we are led to note or expect the signified event we are making correct use of a sign. This is the essence of rational behavior, which animals show in varying degrees. It is entirely realistic, being closely bound up with the actual objective course of history learned by experience, and cashed in or voided by further experience.

If man had kept to the straight and narrow path of sign using, he would be like the other animals, though perhaps a little brighter. He would not talk, but grunt and gesticulate the point. He would make his wishes known, give warnings, perhaps develop a social system like that of bees and ants, with such a wonderful efficiency of communal enterprise that all men would have plenty to eat, warm apartments, all exactly alike and perfectly convenient to live in, and everybody could and would sit in the sun or by the fire, as the climate demanded, not talking but just basking, with every want satisfied, most of his life. The young would romp and make love, the old would sleep, the middle-aged would do the routine work almost unconsciously and eat a great deal. But that would be the life of a social, superintelligent, purely sign-using animal.

To us who are human, it does not sound very glorious. We want to go places and do things,

own all sorts of gadgets that we do not absolutely need, and when we sit down to take it easy we want to talk. Rights and property, social position, special talents and virtues, and above all our ideas, are what we live for. We have gone off on a tangent that takes us far away from the mere biological cycle that animal generations accomplish; and that is because we can use not only signs but symbols.

A symbol differs from a sign in that it does not announce, the presence of the object, the being, condition, or whatnot, which is its meaning, but merely brings this thing to mind. It is not a mere "substitute sign" to which we react as though it were the object itself. The fact is that our reaction to hearing a person's name is quite different from our reaction to the person himself. There are certain rare cases where a symbol stands directly for its meaning: in religious experience, for instance, the Host is not only a symbol but a Presence. But symbols in the ordinary sense are not mystic. They are the same sort of thing that ordinary signs are; only they do not call our attention to something necessarily present or to be physically dealt with--they call up merely a conception of the thing they "mean."

The difference between a sign and a symbol is, in brief, that a sign causes us to think or act in face of the thing signified, whereas a symbol causes us to think about the thing symbolized. Therein lies the great importance of symbolism for human life, its power to make this life so different from any other animal biography that generations of men have found it incredible to suppose that they were of purely zoological origin. A sign is always embedded in reality, in a present that emerges from the actual past and stretches to the future; but a symbol may be divorced from reality altogether. It may refer to what is not the case, to a mere idea, a figment, a dream. It serves, therefore, to liberate thought from the immediate stimuli of a physically present world; and that liberation marks the essential difference between human and non-human mentality. Animals think, but they think of and at things; men think primarily about things. Words, pictures, and memory images are symbols that may be combined and varied in a thousand ways. The result is a symbolic structure whose meaning is a complex of all their respective meanings, and this kaleidoscope of ideas is the typical product of the human brain that we call the "stream of thought."

The process of transforming all direct experiences into imagery or into that supreme mode of symbolic expression, language, has so completely taken possession of the human mind that it is not only a special talent but a dominant, organic need. All our sense impressions leave their traces in our memory not only as signs disposing our practical reactions in the future but also as symbols, images representing our ideas of things; and the tendency to manipulate ideas, to combine and abstract, mix and extend them by playing with symbols, is man's outstanding characteristic. It seems to be what his brain most naturally and spontaneously does. Therefore his primitive mental function is not

judging reality, but dreaming his desires. Dreaming is apparently a basic function of human brains, for it is free and unexhausting like our metabolism, heartbeat, and breath. It is easier to dream than not to dream, as it is easier to breathe than to refrain from breathing. The symbolic character of dreams is fairly well established. Symbol mongering, on this ineffectual, uncritical level, seems to be instinctive, the fulfillment of an elementary need rather than the purposeful exercise of a high and difficult talent.

The special power of man's mind rests on the evolution of this special activity, not on any transcendently high development of animal intelligence. We are not immeasurably higher than other animals; we are different. We have a biological need and with it a biological gift that they do not share. Because man has not only the ability but the constant need of conceiving what has happened to him, what surrounds him, what is demanded of him--short, of symbolizing nature, himself, and his hopes and fears--he has a constant and crying need of expression. What he cannot express, he cannot conceive; what he cannot conceive is chaos, and fills him with terror.

If we bear in mind this all-important craving for expression we get a new picture of man's behavior; for from this trait spring his powers and his weaknesses. The process of symbolic transformation that all our experiences undergo is nothing more nor less than the process of conception, underlying the human faculties of abstraction and imagination.

When we are faced with a strange or difficult situation, we cannot react directly, as other creatures do, with flight, aggression, or any such simple instinctive patterns. Our whole reaction depends on how we manage to conceive the situation--whether we cast it in a definite dramatic form, whether we see it as a disaster, a challenge, a fulfillment of doom, or a fiat of the Divine Will. In words or dreamlike images, in artistic or religious or even in cynical form, we must construe the events of life. There is great virtue in the figure of speech, "I can make nothing of it" to express a failure to understand something. Thought and memory are processes of making the thought content and the memory image; the pattern of our ideas is given by the symbols through which we express them. And in the course of manipulating those symbols we inevitably distort the original experience, as we abstract certain features of it, embroider and reinforce those features with other ideas, until the conception we project on the screen of memory is quite different from anything in our real history. Conception is a necessary and elementary process; what we do with our conceptions is another story. That is the entire history of human culture---of intelligence and morality, folly and superstition, ritual, language, and the arts--all the phenomena that set man apart from, and above, the rest of the animal kingdom. As the religious mind has to make all human history a drama of sin and salvation in order to define its own moral attitudes, so a scientist wrestles with the mere presentation of "the facts" before he can reason about them. The process of envisaging facts, values, hopes, and fears

underlies our whole behavior pattern; and this process is reflected in the evolution of an extraordinary phenomenon found always, and only, in human societies, the phenomenon of language.

Language is the highest and most amazing achievement of the symbolistic human mind. The power it bestows is almost inestimable, for without it anything properly called "thought" is impossible. The birth of language is the dawn of humanity. The line between man and beast--between the highest ape and the lowest savage---is the language line. Whether the primitive Neanderthal man was anthropoid or human depends less on his cranial capacity, his upright posture, or even his use of tools and fire, than on one issue we shall probably never be able to settle---whether or not he spoke.

In all physical traits and practical responses, such as skills and visual judgments, we can find a certain continuity between animal and human mentality. Sign using is an ever evolving, ever improving function throughout the whole animal kingdom, from the lowly worm that shrinks into his hole at the sound of an approaching foot, to the dog obeying his masters command, and even to the learned scientist who watches the movements of an index needle.

This continuity of the sign-using talent has led psychologists to the belief that language is evolved from the vocal expressions, grunts and coos and cries, whereby animals vent their feelings or signal their fellows; that man has elaborated this sort of communion to the point where it makes a perfect exchange of ideas possible.

I do not believe that this doctrine of the origin of language is correct. The essence of language is symbolic, not significant; we use it first and most vitally to formulate and hold ideas in our own minds.

Conception, not social control, is its first and foremost benefit. Watch a young child that is just learning to speak, play with a toy; he says the name of the object, e.g.: "Horsey! horsey! horsey!" over and over again, looks at the object, moves it, always saving the name to himself or to the world at large. It's quite a time before he talks to anyone in particular; he talks first of all to himself. This is his way of forming and fixing the conception of the object in his mind, and around this conception all his knowledge of it grows. Names are the essence of language; for the name is what abstracts the conception of the horse from the horse itself, and lets the mere idea recur at the speaking of the name. This permits the conception gathered from one horse experience to be exemplified again by another instance of a horse, so that the notion embodied in the name is a general notion.

To this end, the baby uses a word long before he asks for the object; when he wants his horsey he is likely to cry and fret, because he is reacting to an actual environment, not forming ideas. He uses the animal language of signs for his wants; talking is still a purely symbolic process--its

practical value has not really impressed him yet.

Language need not be vocal; it may be purely visual, like written language, or even tactual, like the deaf-mute system of speech; but it *must be denotative*. The sounds, intended or unintended, whereby animals communicate do not constitute a language because they are signs, not names. They never fall into an organic pattern, a meaningful syntax of even the most rudimentary sort, as all language seems to do with a sort of driving necessity. That is because signs refer to actual situations, in which things have obvious relations to each other that require only to be noted; but symbols refer to ideas, which are not physically there for inspection, so their connections and features have to be represented. This gives all true language a natural tendency toward growth and development, which seems almost like a life of its own. Languages are not invented; they grow with our need for expression.

In contrast, animal "speech" never has a structure. It is merely an emotional response. Apes may greet their ration of yams with a shout of "Nga! " But they do not say "Nga" between meals. If they could *talk about* their yams instead of just saluting them, they would be the most primitive men instead of the most anthropoid of beasts. They would have ideas, and tell each other things true or false, rational or irrational; they would make plans and invent laws and sing their own praises, as men do.

Notes:

thump v. tread heavily

coo v. a soft murmuring sound that a dove or pigeon makes

growl n. a low guttural sound of anger made by a dog

unequivocal a. not ambiguous, plain, unmistakable

imminence n. closeness, nearness

void v. render invalid

grunt v. utter sth. with a low rough sound from deep in throat

gesticulate v. express with gestures

communal a. for common use

bask v. sit or lie back lazily in warmth and light

romp v. play about roughly and energetically

gadget n. any small and usu. ingenious mechanical device or tool

mystic a. mysterious and awe-inspiring

conception n. idea, intention

therein adv. in that place

zoological a. of or relating to the scientific study of animals
embed v. fix firmly in a surrounding mass
figment n. a thing invented or existing only in the imagination
stimulus n. (*pl.* stimuli) a thing that rouses to activity or energy
kaleidoscope n. constantly and quickly changing pattern
manipulate v. control or handle with skill
spontaneously ad. automatically
metabolism n. chemical process by which food is built up into living matter in an organism or by which living matter is broken down into simpler substances
refrain v. keep oneself from doing sth.
monger v. spread
ineffectual a. ineffective
transcendently ad. greatly, supremely
conceive v. form in the mind
craving n. strong desire
underlie v. (*fig.*) form the basis of
doom n. death or ruin
fiat n formal authorization, order or decree
divine a. of, from or like God
cynical a. believing that people do not do things for good, sincere or noble reasons, but only for their own advantage
construe v. interpret words or actions
distort v. give a false account of, misrepresent
embroider v. add untrue details to a story etc. to make it more interesting
superstition n. belief that certain events cannot be explained by human reason or physical laws
ritual n. series of actions used in a religious or some other ceremony
salvation n. saving of a person's soul from sin and its consequences
envisage v. imagine, picture in the mind as a future possibility
ape n. any of the four (usu. tailless) primates (gorilla, chimpanzee, orangutan, gibbon) most closely related to man
anthropoid a. man-like in form
cranial a. of the skull
vent v. find or provide an outlet for an emotion
communion n. a sharing, esp. of thoughts etc.

doctrine n. a set of beliefs held by a church, political party, group of scientists, etc.
 foremost a. best, most famous or important
 recur v. happen again, happen repeatedly
 exemplify v. illustrate by example
 embody v. express or give visible form to
 fret v. become unhappy, bad-tempered, or anxious about sth.
 tactual a. of the sense of touch
 denotative a. indicative
 syntax n. the grammatical arrangement of words, showing their connection and relation
 rudimentary a. involving basic principles, fundamental
 ration n. a single portion of provisions; fuel, clothing, etc.
 yam n. type of sweet potato
 salute v. greet, hail
 as well as: in addition to
 attend to: focus one's attention on
 reckon with: take into account, consider as important
 bound up with: closely connected with
 cash in (on): profit (from), take advantage (of)
 go off at a tangent: change suddenly from one line of thought, action, etc. to another
 in that: because
 call up: bring to appear
 refrain from sth. : keep from doing sth.
 figure of speech: word or phrase used for vivid or dramatic effect and not literally make nothing of
 sth. : fail to understand sth.
 wrestle with sth. : struggle to deal with or overcome sth.

Cultural Notes:

1. Susanne K. Langer (1895~1985) is one of the most influential writers and philosophers of last century. He is the author of *Philosophy in New Key* (1942), *Feeling and Form* (1953), and *Mind : An Essay in Human Feeling* (1967).
2. Neanderthal man refers to the type of human widely distributed in paleolithic Europe, with a retreating forehead and massive brow-ridges. Neanderthal is a region in Germany where remains were found.

Questions:

1. Which of the following statements is NOT true about symbols and signs?
 - A. Psychologists often neglect that a symbol is different from signs.
 - B. Human beings use signs too.
 - C. We use symbols as animals do, though with much more elaboration.
 - D. A sign is anything that announces the being or the condition of some event.
2. Why isn't man limited in the mere biological cycle that animal generations accomplish?
 - A. Because man has a wonderful efficiency of communal enterprise.
 - B. Because man can use not only signs but symbols.
 - C. Because man kept to the straight and narrow path of sign using.
 - D. Because man lives for his ideas.
3. What is the highest and most amazing achievement of the symbolic human mind?
 - A. Conception.
 - B. Culture.
 - C. Large cranial capacity.
 - D. Language.
4. What is the essence of language?
 - A. Names are the essence of language.
 - B. Language may be purely visual.
 - C. Conception is the first and foremost benefit of language.
 - D. Language is evolved from the vocal expressions.
5. Why are the apes the most anthropoid of beasts instead of the most primitive men?
 - A. Because they have no ideas as men do.
 - B. Because they do not say "Nga" between meals.
 - C. Because their language is merely an emotional response.
 - D. Because they salute yams

Section B

Party Politics

Etiquette at an office party.'? Why, these people have been socializing happily every working day of their lives, give or take a few melees, rumors, and complaint petitions. All it takes to turn this into holiday merriment is a bit of greenery looped around the office— the staff will soon be looped, too. Surely it is enough that the annual Christmas party has the magic ingredients: time off from work, free food and drink, and a spirit of fun replacing such ugly work realities as sexual harassment.

Furthermore, partygoers figure, it offers relief from such pesky obligations as thanking anyone or being kind to wallflowers because there really aren't any hosts. Nobody has to pay (that same nobody who generously provides the telephone line for long-distance personal calls), and so nobody's feelings need be considered.

This is all pure hospitality, there for the taking, like the office supplied felt-tipped pens everyone has been pocketing all year. Out of the natural goodness of its corporate heart and the spirit of the holiday season, the company wishes only to give its employees a roaring good time, and the employees, out of loyalty and the thrill of getting to know their bosses off-duty as equals, delight in the opportunity.

For those still dimly aware of the once-standard give-and-take of real social life, this no-fault approach to business entertaining seems a godsend. In the now-rare domain of genuine society, hosts are supposed to plan and pay for the entertainment of their guests, on their own time and in their own houses. Guests have strict duties, as well, from answering invitations to cooperating with all arrangements, even to the extent of pronouncing them perfectly lovely.

Business entertaining appears to remove the burdens of time, effort, money, individual responsibility—and the etiquette connected with them. The people who do the planning are paid for their trouble, so those who benefit need not consider they have incurred a debt. Why, the annual Christmas party ought to be an inspiration to lower level employees to work their way into realms where company-sponsored partying can be enjoyed all year long.

Not so fast. Flinty Miss Manners does not recognize any holidays from etiquette. (Employees, if not employers, should consider themselves lucky that she is only on the Party Committee, not the one that might take up ethical questions about those pens and calls.) Office parties differ from private ones but are no freer from rules.

If it were indeed true that everyone has a better time without etiquette, Miss Manners could easily be persuaded to take the day off. But having long served on the Office Party Etiquette Cleanup Subcommittee, she is aware that things generally do not go well when there is no

recognized etiquette and everyone is forced to improvise.

Let us look at all this spontaneous, carefree fun: There being no proper place for the boss, he or she hangs around the door, concerned about mixing with everyone. It might discourage hospitable bosses to see guests staring at them in horror and then slithering in by a side door. But etiquette's solution of having everyone greeted in a receiving line was rejected as too stiff. So one can hardly blame employees for recalling a long-ingrained principle of the workplace: Seeing the boss and having a good time are best not scheduled at the same time.

Desperate to make the time count, the boss grabs the nearest available person and starts delivering practiced words about the contribution he makes to their great enterprise. The reaction is not quite what was hoped for. Discreet questioning establishes that this is an employee's guest. He doesn't work for the company, recognize the boss, or appreciate the attention—and, as a matter of fact, has only a passing acquaintance with the employee who issued the invitation. What this guest wants is not professional fellowship but a fresh drink, if the boss would kindly step out of the way.

Now, the reason the invitation said "and guest" was to avoid the ticklish issue of who is still married to whom and what the spouse calls itself. Last year, unmarried employees were furious when their partners were not included, and married employees complained that the forms by which their spouses were addressed were offensive: "Mrs." offended women who preferred "Ms.," and wives who had the same surnames outraged everybody who didn't. This year, the complaints will be from spouses who were not told that there was a party or who were told that spouses weren't invited—but found out otherwise. There won't be many complaints. They will, however, be memorable, darkly charging the company with promoting immorality.

Meanwhile, what about those who are interested in promoting a bit of immorality, or just plain romance, of their own? They, too, are creating problems that will reach far into the new year. True office romances are the least of them, with their charges of favoritism and melding professional and personal time. More serious is the fact that, in spite of the liquor and high spirits, it still counts as sexual harassment when anyone with supervisory powers makes unreciprocated overtures to a lower-ranking employee. And foolhardy when a lower-ranking employee annoys a higher-ranking one.

Some employees have their minds only on business and will be spending party time actively promoting workaday concerns. Remembering the company rhetoric about open communications and all being in this together, they will actually seek out the boss, who by this time is grateful to be addressed by anyone at all.

But they don't want to engage in platitudes. They accept compliments with: "Well, then how about a raise?" They plead for promotions, explain confidentially who ought to be fired, and

advance previously submitted ideas about revolutionizing the business that have been unaccountably unappreciated for years. In one evening, they manage to cut through the entire hierarchy and procedures the boss has painstakingly established for the purpose of being spared this kind of importuning.

Eventually, usually somewhat late in the party, it occurs to someone that this informal setting is just the time to offer the boss some constructive personal criticism. What else does talking frankly and informally mean but an invitation to unload opinions without any career consequence?

Here is where the company has pulled a fast one on its employees. "Go ahead," it has said, "relax, have a good time, forget about the job." And the naive have taken this at face value. This event is called a party, a place where one lets loose without worrying about being judged by the cold standard of professional usefulness.

Even employees who adhere strictly to standard business dress in the office may not know what the bosses might consider vulgar in evening wear. Here is a chance to show off their racy and imaginative off-duty clothes. But over there are supervisors murmuring that people who look like that can't really be sent out to represent the company.

Worse are the comments on anyone whose idea of fun is a little boisterous. It may be just the behavior that makes one a delight, or a trial to one's friends. But here, it is not being offered for the delight or tolerance of friends. It is being judged on criteria other than whether the person is a riot.

It is not that Miss Manners wants to spoil the office party by these warnings. She just wants to prevent it from spoiling careers. And the solution is what was banished from the party for being too inhibiting: etiquette.

The first formality that must come back is inviting everyone by name. The practice of merely counting every invitation as two is as dangerous as it is unflattering. But people who have been clearly identified and told that they must respond, the suggestion must be made neutrally, to show that the party is a treat, not a requirement already have some sense that they are both individually sought after and expected to be responsible.

What constitutes a couple is a murkier question than Miss Manners and any sensible employer ought to investigate, but employees simply can be asked to supply the name of a spouse or friend they want to invite. (An office party can be limited by confining it to employees, in which case it should be held during office hours. But inviting spouses and such is better. Having to work is enough distraction from one's more intimate relationships, and the staff was not compiled like a guest list, according to personal compatibility.

Since we have established, Miss Manners hopes, that the point of an office party is not whooping it up or telling people off, what is it? It is showing appreciation of the staff.

This starts with a well-run receiving line. However much popular opinion may regard receiving lines as nasty ordeals, they were invented to be, and remain, the easiest way to get everyone recognized by the key people. The oldest receiving-line trick in the world still works: Someone whose business it is to know everyone, or someone unimportant enough to be able to ask each guest his name, announces the guests to the host as they go through the line. The host can then scornfully declare: "Of course I know Annette. We couldn't run this place without her." For extra charm, the employee's guest is also told how wonderful that employee is. This always seems more sincere than straight-out flattery, and from then on, whenever the employee complains that everyone at the office is an idiot, the spouse will counter by repeating that appreciation.

It is often erroneously assumed that the style of the party ought to be what employees are used to: their own kind of music, food, and other things the executive level believes itself to have outgrown. Nonsense. What employees want is a taste of high-level entertaining. This may vary greatly according to the nature of the business. If, however, the party is too formal for the employees' taste, they'll get a good laugh and enjoy the contrast all the more when they continue partying on their own afterward.

The clever employee will dress as the executives do, keeping in mind that there are few fields in which people are condemned for looking insufficiently provocative. Refusing or limiting drinks is not the handicap at business parties that it may be under the overly hospitable eye of a private host. And the real opportunity for career advancement is not petitioning a boss but rescuing one who has been cornered or stranded, thus demonstrating that one knows how to talk charmingly about non-business matters.

At the end, there is another receiving line. That is, the bosses plant themselves conspicuously by the exit, grabbing the hand of anyone trying to get away and thanking him for coming. Even the dimmest guest will then realize it is appropriate to thank back -- that is, to realize that something has been offered and deserves gratitude.

After all, isn't that why the office Christmas party is given?

If the only goal were for the company to show the staff its appreciation, this could be effectively done with a day off and a bonus to go with it.

Notes:

etiquette n. formal rules of correct and polite behavior in society or among members of a profession
礼仪、礼节

melee n. struggling or disorderly crowd 混战

petition n. request or demand to a government or other bodies