



The most important things to know about...

Making a great first impression

By Paula Abdul

American Idol's sweetheart—and new Home Shopping Network designer (her “Forever Your Girl” line of accessories debuted in December)—gives us her advice on how to shine like a star.

Preparation is essential. “Gene Kelly, my hero, used to preach to people, ‘Fail to prepare, prepare to fail.’ And as harsh as that is, we all know: Cram for a test, sometimes you’re lucky. But when you really study, you’re prepared, and it feels good.”

Know where your talents lie. “Learn where your strengths are and expose them. And allow your weaknesses to come across as vulnerability, not as a lack of skills. Jason Castro from the last season [of *American Idol*] was brilliant at that: He couldn’t hit the high notes, so his style of hitting them was very whispery. The greatest singers of all time, from Sinatra to Elvis, they all had their special niche.”

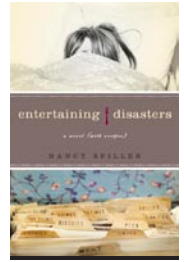
Engage your audience. “Create moments. Look everyone in the eye. In life, you have to know who you are, so be you.”



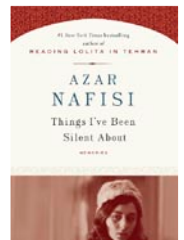
Book marks

How to read the latest releases:

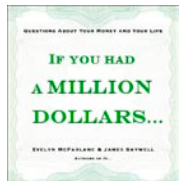
In the tub: *Entertaining Disasters* by Nancy Spiller
“FW” writes anonymous articles about the dishy dinners she throws for Hollywood elite, but the reality is that she hasn’t given a dinner party in years—until the editor of a glossy food magazine invites himself over. This zany novel (with recipes) will make you appreciate your own fallen soufflés that much more.



With the club: *Things I've Been Silent About* by Azar Nafisi
Against the backdrop of Iran’s seismic political shifts, the author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* examines the private politics and unwritten treaties of family in this searing memoir of her childhood.



One to snub: *If You Had a Million Dollars* by Evelyn McFarlane and James Saywell
A series of conversation-starting questions about how money affects you and what you’d do with a big bundle of it. We say skip the book and save the 13 bucks—download “If I Had a Million Dollars” by the Barenaked Ladies and come up with your own wish list of what to do with the cash.



From the Duh! files



In a recent study published in the journal *Obesity*, researchers found that a group of dieters lost weight during the week but stopped losing weight over the weekend because they were eating more.