

*Crash Course in
Courtesy*

By Mrs. Manners



"For decades, thousands of Leadership Institute graduates have benefited from this charming and useful guide, written by our country's most experienced hostess of young conservative houseguests, my wife, Helen."

Morton C. Blackwell

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With apologies to Judith Martin, whose column "Miss Manners" is the single feature which gives redeeming social value to the Washington Post. --Helen R. Blackwell

Introduction

As a Leadership Institute student or intern, you are the *creme de la creme* of American youth. Clearly you behave well and present an appropriate demeanor, or you would not have been chosen.

No doubt, your own mother painstakingly taught you all the principles of etiquette outlined here; but that was so long ago... and you had so many other things on your mind.

If you owe it to your philosophy to study how to win, you also owe it to your philosophy to behave in a courteous and socially acceptable manner. So much more is expected of conservatives than of others! Thus, for the sake of your effectiveness in politics, or in any career you choose, allow me to refresh your memory.

On the whole, good manners consist of consideration for other people and an attempt to make them feel at ease.

The Golden Rule will usually guide you to proper behavior in human relations. Don't be intimidated by etiquette -- a friendly, helpful approach will compensate for minor infractions of Emily Post in most people's minds. Nevertheless, the following guidelines are important.

Table Manners

Of course you remember the mega-rules, such as never wearing a hat or cap indoors (that is, gentlemen must not; ladies may, but no longer seem to in recent years); not starting to eat until everyone has been served, and the blessing (if any) has been said; never touching your food (except bread and fried chicken) with your fingers; and putting your napkin in your lap.

The old jingle “Mabel, Mabel, if you’re able, keep your elbows off the table,” still applies. Also, please sit up as straight as you can.

Equally vital is the rule about speaking with your mouth full of food: DON’T !! To put it another way, keep your lips together when you are chewing. (Not when you are speaking -- just while chewing!)

The manner in which you hold your knife and fork while cutting up your meat is also crucial. You will be judged, justly or unjustly, as well-bred or ill-bred according to this skill more quickly than any other.

The proper method in the United States is to hold your knife in your right hand, and your fork in your left hand, tines down.

Use the fork to hold in place the piece of meat, while cutting off one small piece of meat with the knife. Then, lay the knife on the right side of the plate, shift the fork to your right hand, and eat that piece of meat.

Repeat for EACH piece of meat. Do NOT cut up several

pieces of meat at once.

I realize the entire system sounds as if it were designed by a vegetarian; but rest assured, using any other method will arouse suspicions that you were brought up to be someone other than a person of refinement.

Of course, you know better than to criticize any food you are served or offered. But, what to do if it is something you simply cannot eat, due to allergy, religion, or decided distaste?

Say, “No thank you,” or, if it is served to you, SAY NOTHING, and move it about on your plate if you must. No well-mannered hostess would call attention to this behavior. If pressed, you may explain the problem politely: e.g., “It looks simply delicious, but I am allergic to strawberries.”

If you have unusual dietary restrictions, when you are invited for a meal it is best to refuse the invitation, citing your restrictions. If the hostess sincerely wishes to have you, she will inquire about the details, and attempt to accommodate them.

A hostess who had no advance warning of your particular idiosyncrasies should not be embarrassed for failing to conform to them.

If you are invited to a dinner party, it is good form to bring along some flowers or wine, although this is not required.

Another lovely gesture is to write a thank-you note afterward to the host and hostess. Such a note was once mandatory. Today this courtesy is considered the mark of a

lady or gentleman of fine breeding -- and surely there will be an occasion on which you will wish to be so considered.

Punctuality is especially important at a dinner party. Food has an irritating tendency to grow cold or dry while waiting for latecomers.

By the same token, you are expected to stay and visit for a reasonable time after dinner -- but not to wear out your welcome.

The dinner guest who is still sitting in the parlor at midnight, while the hostess is yawning and thinking of all that food now hopelessly stuck on all those dirty dishes, will not be so welcome next time. (Need we describe her feelings toward those still around at 1 AM?)

Telephone Manners

Regarding the appropriate time to telephone your fellow man, bear in mind that some people actually retire by 9 or 10 PM. Avoid calling after that time, except to people whose habits you know. When calling long distance, don't forget to make note of time differences.

If campaign emergencies require late night calls, apologize for the lateness of the hour. Otherwise, the old "9 to 9" rule (don't call before 9 AM or after 9 PM) is the safest.

When making any call, always give your name at the outset. Most professional offices make the receptionist ask for your name if you don't give it; so it saves time and embarrassment to begin this way: "Hello, this is Ann Jones

with the Leadership Institute. May I speak with Mr. Smith?”
The same opening line serves when calling a residence.

Especially when you call someone of the opposite sex at home, it is wise to make your identity clear to whoever answers the phone, so that no one need wonder who is calling his or her spouse!

Vive La Difference

If you go in for radical feminism, you will not be at all interested in the following section (and probably do not belong at this school). On the other hand, if you wish to uphold the standards of Western civilization while those about you are falling into barbarism, read on.

A gentleman stands when a lady enters the room, and remains standing until she sits down or says, “Please sit down.” A lady keeps this rule in mind, and does not keep him standing forever.

A gentleman opens doors for a lady; a lady permits him to do so.

A gentleman precedes a lady going downstairs, to catch her in case she falls, and follows her upstairs, for the same reason. (Don’t expect many people to know this one, but it’s so lovely I had to include it.)

A gentleman walks on the outside (street side) when going along a city sidewalk with a lady, so as to place himself between her and the traffic. Don’t be discouraged if some companions are confused by your attempt to follow this or other rules; carry on, and be thankful that you were not the

one who revealed a lack of knowledge.

In a good restaurant, the gentleman asks the lady what she wants to order, and then orders for her. Do not expect all waiters to be aware of this convention, but in the best restaurants, it will be followed. In fact, the lady may be given a menu which does not list the prices of the items.

A gentleman does not enter a lady's bedroom (or vice-versa) unless they are married. In a hotel or office, the rule is that if they must be in a room alone for some reason, the door must be left ajar.

Behavior of a Houseguest

As a Leadership Institute student, intern or youth coordinator, you may be given free lodging in the home of some supporter of the Institute, of a candidate or of a cause for which you are working.

If this supporter is an Oscar Madison ("Odd Couple") type of character, living in abject squalor, you may safely ignore most of the advice below. However, if you are entering a normal household, certain standards apply.

Meals:

Amazing as it may seem, the person preparing meals actually plans them, and unless his assets rest in Swiss accounts, buys only roughly the amount of food needed for the number of people expected. Thus a quick phone call at 6 PM to say you are not coming home for dinner is helpful (since otherwise everyone may sit around waiting for you), but is really not sufficient.

If you do not expect to be home for a given meal (assuming the host is providing your meals), notify him, or preferably notify whoever prepares the food, AS SOON AS YOU KNOW you will be absent.

If you find that the demands of campaigning keep you away more and more often, inform the host not to expect you unless you specifically announce (well in advance) that you will be there to eat.

Please offer to help with the cleanup after meals, if you are a regular participant in consuming them. The most beloved long-term houseguests are those who are often willing to wash dishes. The hostess may refuse your help -- but offer!

Use of the Bathroom:

Unless there is a guest bathroom solely for your use, keep in mind that others need the bathroom too. Ask at the outset when it will be convenient for you to bathe, shower or shave; and always knock before entering. Be as quick as you can in every instance.

Please don't splash water all over everything! Wash out the shower or tub THOROUGHLY after each use, and the lavatory as well. If no paper towels are available, use Kleenex or toilet paper -- but DO IT! Leaving a disgusting bathtub or sink full of hair and an inch or water on the floor will destroy the good will of your hostess faster than anything I can think of.

In this context, the ideal guest is one of whom the hostess can truly say, "I can't tell when she/he has been in the bathroom."

Bedclothes:

Make your bed daily, or if you are incapable of that skill, simply spread up the covers and bedspread as neatly as you can.

Your hosts are not supposed to be snooping in your room, but they may not be able to avoid seeing that you have turned their guestroom into a pigpen if that is the case.

During an extended stay, you will want to wash your sheets from time to time. Ask for the use of the washing machine, or directions to a washeteria. (This again assumes there is no staff of servants who change your linens and make life pleasant for all.)

When you are moving out, pull all linens from your bed and wash them if you can. If not, ask where they should be left, and cover the bed neatly with the bedspread.

Smoking:

Many people have no objection to smoking in their homes. You can usually identify them by the fact that they have ash trays everywhere, usually filled with ashes.

Others, however, feel differently. Some believe that smoking is sinful and immoral, or harmful to human health.

Others may or may not care about their guests' health, but may find the habit filthy and smelly, befouling their otherwise pleasant homes.

Still others are allergic, and suffer from watery eyes, drippy,

clogged noses and other discomforts in the presence of smoking. Therefore, if you do not see dirty ash trays, please ask whether or not you may smoke. If you detect the slightest hesitation, have mercy and refrain. (You can always go outside to smoke.)

Placement of Your Belongings:

If your host has provided you with a room or space, your clothing and possessions belong there.

While some people may not object to seeing your coats, shoes, socks, underwear, papers, etc. strewn about their dining room or front hall, many people find this disgusting. Therefore, be considerate. If you find that your hostess has carried some belonging of yours into your room, take the hint!

Use of the Telephone:

As common sense dictates, do not monopolize your host's telephone.

In all probability you will have a personal cell phone. Use it for your personal calls.

Ask before using your host's phone. If you are talking on one extension, and a family member picks up on another extension to make a call, cut your call short and then let him know the phone is free.

Of course you must ask before making long distance calls, and reimburse any charges. If you are permitted to charge a

number of calls, for Heaven's sake pay up promptly.

Try to avoid receiving an inordinate number of calls, or forcing your hosts to serve as your message-takers.

Miscellaneous:

Mrs. Manners places the following items in her "Please Don't Eat the Daisies" file (named for the mother who was giving a party, and thought she had remembered every possible infraction to warn her little boys against -- until they ate the flowers in her centerpiece!)

- Unless you are specifically invited there, the upstairs, or the bedroom area of your host and hostess, is OFF LIMITS. In the name of decency and privacy, please respect this rule above all.
- Don't put out a cigarette in the host's bathroom glass. Don't burn cigarette holes in the floor.
- Don't let trash and garbage pile up and flow over wastebaskets in your room -- carry them out and dump them in the outside cans.
- Don't alter the setting on the heating or cooling system 10 or 15 degrees -- chances are it is set at the temperature the host prefers.
- Being a houseguest doesn't automatically entitle you to entertain your friends in the house -- please ask first, and don't make it a regular habit.

Mrs. Manners knows YOU would never do such dreadful things. She only mentions them here to alleviate her frustrations, for these are not hypothetical problems in her experience.

Thank-You's:

Good manners DEMAND a written thank-you note after having been a guest in someone's home. A small "bread-and-butter" gift (such as flowers, candy, or some household item) is usual after such a social visit. These show that you know the rules of etiquette.

But a person who has hosted you because of his dedication to the conservative philosophy wants, most of all, the assurance that you are committed to advancing these values throughout your life, and will never betray them. Your fulfillment of this responsibility will constitute the best of all possible thank-you's to your host or hostess.



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