

MANNERS, ETIQUETTE, COURTESY

CUSTOMS OF THE PAST

QUEST

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Take your elbows off the table!

Don't talk with your mouth full!

Look people in the eye when you speak to them!

Write your thank you notes!

For generations children have learned these rules from their
parents!!!!!!!!!!

We have all witnessed rude public behavior. The people behind you
who talk through the entire movie. The stranger who lets the door slam
in our face. The driver, who steals your parking space. LOUD, public
cell phone conversations! ---- Do people know how to act in public any
longer?

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Etiquette is the language of manners! Manners tell us WHAT is
appropriate, Etiquette tells us HOW to be appropriate!

Manners are more than knowing when to put your napkin on your lap, and not slurping your drink. Manners are an expression of our inner character! To be RESPECTFUL, KIND, CONSIDERATE and HONEST, are the principles, that form the basis of good manners! ---- To treat others as you would like to be treated!

Etiquette refers to the rules, the guiding codes, of socially acceptable behavior, that enables us to practice good manners. The Laws of Etiquette, published in 1883, defines etiquette as, “a code of laws established by society for its protection against rudeness, and other offences, which the civil law cannot reach”. It goes on to say that the civil law cannot punish a man for discourteous behavior, but society can cause him to change his manners by refusing to recognize him.

If etiquette refers to the rules of socially accepted behavior, manners relate to how we handle the rules and the situations they apply to.

Etiquette tells you which fork to use. Manners tell you what to do when your neighbor doesn't ----- doesn't know which fork to use ---- that is. Good manners may even tell us to disregard the rules in order to put others at ease.

For example, albeit extreme, consider what happened at a formal dinner given my Queen Victoria. When the finger bowls were placed on the table before dessert, the honored guest, unfamiliar with the custom, promptly picked up his finger bowl and drank the water. To everyone's astonishment, the Queen immediately followed suit. Soon, the other guests were sipping from their finger bowls too. ---- A well mannered person would sooner commit a breach of etiquette than cause embarrassment or discomfort. Manners are the tools that help us feel more comfortable and help put others at ease.

Courtesy is the gestures we perform out of respect for others. They can be as simple as holding a door, or letting someone go ahead of you in line. It is having an awareness of our surroundings and how our behavior may affect others.

Codes of proper behavior have been around and written about as long as man has been here.

God gave Moses the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai, as a code of behavior for the human race: Honor thy Father and Mother; Thou shalt not Kill or Steal!

The first known book on appropriate behavior was a guide an Egyptian government official, wrote for his son, in 2500 BC.

In 13th century Europe, the Code of Chivalry established, the proper behavior of knights, regarding the Christian church, their country and the treatment of women ---- to be civil to a woman was the only protection they had against man's superior strength!

In 1520, Erasmus of Rotterdam, wrote a handbook on manners for boys, the last of four aspects he believed should be part of a boy's training (the first religion, the second study, the third duty). Considered the first narrative in Western Europe on the moral and practical education of children, the book gave instructions on how to get along in society, and covered body posture, facial expressions, dress, church behavior, table manners and conversation.

The boys often learned by limericks “Pick not thy teeth with thy knife or finger-end, ---- but with a stick or some clean thing, so ye not offend”

Up until the 16th century I found that a vast number of the “rules” focused on bodily noises. To quote Erasmus, “All noises other than speech are to be reduced to a minimum and especially those that draw attention to the body”. In Elizabethan England, body noises, such as belching and passing wind were strictly forbidden in public ---- in fact it was so frowned upon that members of the royal court who violated this code of conduct, often put themselves in self-imposed exile, due to the unbearable embarrassment they suffered. Today, although such bodily noises continue to be frowned upon in polite society, we do have the option of saying “excuse me” ---- when one escapes.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the origins of today’s “etiquette” began in the French court in the 17th and 18th centuries. Etiquette in French means “card or ticket.” King Louis XIV (14th) had an annual summer celebration at the Palace of Versailles. After one such celebration, the gardens were “trashed.” The following year, Louis collaborated with his gardener to develop a system of “little cards –

tickets” for his guests to navigate around the gardens. Such as; throw trash here, walk on the path, don’t swim in the fountain.

Louis was so pleased with how he had tamed the nobility in the gardens, he devised rules about how to behave in the King’s Court ---- from which we get the term Courtesy, meaning the “way of the court.” These rules were associated with the upper class and provided the “ticket” for those striving to move up in society by emulating their behavior.

Proper manners were a concern of leaders in the more democratic society of 18th century America. Writing a “courtesy guide” was considered chic! The guides were written by the confident upper class, for the middle and lower class people. At the age of 14, George Washington penned, Rules of Civility. While his 110 rules for civil behavior, may seem quaint and outdated, many have meaning and relevance today.

For example: “Put not another bit into your mouth till the former be swallowed,” and “Turn not your back to others, especially when speaking.”

Thomas Jefferson's, "Rules of Etiquette", and Benjamin Franklin's popular Poor Man's Almanac, were written to regulate their conduct in life. To quote Benjamin Franklin, "Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation."

Emily Post might be considered the Mother, "Maven of Manners!" She was born in 1872, attended Miss Graham's Finishing School, and met her future husband, Edwin Post, at a ball in New York City. They had two children, and Emily divorced him at age 33, because of his affairs with chorus girls. When her sons attended boarding school she began to write. Emily's early writings focused on architecture and interior design. In 1922 she published, Etiquette – In Society, In Business, In Politics, and At Home. It became a best seller and paved the way for her successors to continue preaching good manners. In subsequent editions of Etiquette, Post, instead of decrying the lack of etiquette among Americans, she applauded their youthful enthusiasm and sought to refine it. ---- Unlike earlier times, weddings no longer had to be set by noon, for fear the bridegroom would no longer be sober after that hour. Emily died in 1960, her legacy continues in the Emily Post Institute she founded in 1946. Laura Claridge in her biography, Emily Post, tells how

Emily's keenest pleasure would probably still come from the statistic, citing Etiquette, second only to the Bible, as the book most stolen from public libraries, an honor Claridge claims held through the end of the 20th century.

Post was succeeded by Amy Vanderbilt, who in 1952 called herself, a "journalist in the field of etiquette." Soon other etiquette mavens followed, notably, Letita Baldrige, and Judith "Miss Manners", whose tongue in cheek columns led to the publishing of several books , including in 1999, Miss Manners Guide to Domestic Tranquility.

Manners have developed over the years as a key element of society. Early humans lived in groups in order to hunt, share food and keep warm. But to live so close together humans had to think about others, not just themselves, or the group would fall apart. Our distant ancestors developed behaviors to show respect, fairness and kindness. Those have evolved into today's manners.

Some "old" manners are still appropriate today, even though the original reason for them has changed. ---- Have you ever wondered why

you were taught to keep your elbows off the table, or why men walk on the street side of the sidewalk? To keep your elbows off the table dates to the middle ages, when tables were often just a big board placed on a stump. Leaning on the table with your elbows could easily tip the table and everyone would lose their food. The custom of a gentleman walking on the street side when accompanying a lady dates back to the days before indoor plumbing. People would dispose of their waste by throwing it out the window! Therefore, by walking on the street side the gentleman protected his lady in case such a “mess” should occur ---- keeping her clean and dry! In modern society, the greater threat to a woman is the proximity to cars, trucks, buses, and muddy splashes ---- this also gives her an opportunity to window shop!

Table manners were once VERY savage: men wore their hats at the table; guests brought their own knives; all food was eaten with the fingers; everyone shared a common goblet; and the tablecloth was used as a napkin. The evolution and introduction of the napkin and the fork brought neatness, civility, to dining!

In Roman antiquity napkins were used for wiping the brow, in the warm Mediterranean climate. Each guest brought his own. Upon departure, it was filled with the leftovers from the feast, to be taken home, a custom that continues today in restaurant “doggy bags.” In the early middle ages, the napkin disappeared and the hands and mouth were wiped on whatever was available, the back of the hand, clothing or a piece of bread. In the late middle ages the napkin returned as a communal towel at the table, about the size of our average bath towel. By the mid 18th century napkins were widely used, although still large. Fashionable men of the time tied the napkin around their neck to protect their starched ruffled collars. Hence the expression “to make ends meet.” By the 19th century napkins were to be laid on the lap, fastening to a button or tying around the neck became a sign of lower class upbringing. Today, eating lobster, mussels or a crayfish dinner are rare occasions when biblike napkins are still permissible!

The first forks were two pronged and large. They were used for spearing food to remove from the fire, for serving, ---- but NOT for eating!!!! (Our carving forks still keep the shape and size of their original function). The knife and spoon had long been accepted as

common eating utensils, the fork had a much harder time earning its place at the table. The fork's similarity to the pitchfork, a sign of the devil, was the source of most resistance. So you can imagine the astonishment when, the Greek Emperor's niece arrived in Venice, in the 11th century, with a case of forks for her wedding. She was condemned by the local clergy. When she died of the plague two years later, the priest, suggested it was God's punishment for her, "forked" ways ---- the devil took her! It wasn't until the 15th century, when Catherine de Medici arrived from Italy to marry French King Henry II, with a dozen intricate forks, that the fork became eagerly adopted by wealthy families. By the time of the first World's Fair in 1850, and with the invention of silver plating, eating utensils, and in particular forks, became available to the masses in the United States and Europe. Margaret Visser in, The Rituals of Dinner, comments on several challenges of eating with a fork, "eating peas with a fork is as bad as trying to eat soup with a knitting needle." With the acceptance of the fork, neatness in dining was emphasized ---- and no longer were large napkins required. According to Ben Jonson, "Forks arrived in England from Italy 'to the saving of the napkin.'"

As dining became more “civil,” appropriate conversation was emphasized. The Laws of Etiquette lists rules for polite dinner conversation in the late 19th century, that are still appropriate for the 21st century. Avoid politics and religion; talk of yourself and your own affairs as little as possible; do not speak in a loud voice; be careful not to interrupt; and never whisper! David Ridderheim remembers reading from his Mother’s copy of Etiquette, about what to talk about if you are seated at a dinner party next to a person you can’t stand ---- Post’s advice was to ---- recite the multiplication tables to one another!

The handshake, a toast and the Tuxedo have their roots in British traditions. Practiced in ancient Greece, Sir Walter Raleigh brought the handshake to the British Court in the 16th century. It was originally a gesture of peace ---- by demonstrating that your hands held no weapons. Today, a handshake by both men AND women, is the custom upon meeting, greeting, parting, offering congratulations, and at sporting events. The handshake conveys trust, balance and equality.

A toast as we know it, is a ritual in which a drink is taken as an expression of honor or goodwill. In 1602, Shakespeare first mentions a

“toast” in, Merry Wives of Windsor. The term comes literally from toasted bread, which was put in the tankards of wine to absorb the sediment. The custom of touching glasses evolved from concern about poisoning. Clinking glasses together would cause each drink to spill over into the others. The origin of proposing a, “toast to your good health.”

Since Quest Club gentlemen “sport” their Tuxedos twice a year, I wanted to share with you how the Tuxedo was introduced to America. In 1886, a member of the Tuxedo Club, James Potter, was invited by the Prince of Wales to his country estate, when Potter asked what he should wear? The Prince replied, that he had adopted a short jacket, in place of the tailcoat, for dinner in the country, and sent him to his London tailor. Upon Potter’s return to America, the new style jacket quickly became the custom for Tuxedo Park’s informal dinners. One evening, a group of members wore their new dinner jackets to a bachelor dinner in New York. Their jackets attracted the attention of other diners who, upon enquiry were told, “Oh, that is what they wear for dinner up at Tuxedo.” From that day forth, the name Tuxedo, has been associated with the shorter style formal wear.

Is punctuality, and are hand written thank you notes, customs of the past? Once upon a time, there was no such thing as being FASHIONABLY LATE! To be LATE was considered VERY RUDE! If you were invited to dinner and showed up 15 minutes late you would end up eating in the kitchen, with the household staff. You were allowed to join the party when the polite guests, those who arrived ON TIME, had finished and were retiring for the evening's entertainment.

George Washington had a passion for promptness, born from his youthful study of the Rules of Civility. He ate dinner each day at exactly 4:00. When his guests arrived late for dinner, they were surprised to find the President halfway through his meal. To his startled guests he would say, "We are punctual here. My cook never asks whether the company has arrived, but whether has the hour come!"

While being FASHIONABLY LATE has become the norm for dinner parties, to be PUNCTUAL when meeting friends, going to church and for business appointments is still GOOD MANNERS ---- to be punctual shows RESPECT for others!

Years ago “visiting cards” and “bread and butter notes” were customary. Within a couple of days after a dinner party the lady of the house would “call on” her hostess and leave a “visiting card” ---- “Bread and Butter” notes were written to express gratitude for the tiniest favor, -- “Dear Susan. Thank you for the kind use of your umbrella last week when we got caught in the rain.” If we continued to send thank you notes for the tiniest of things, we’d waste a lot of trees. Today, hand written notes are still standard for accepting gifts, and strongly encouraged after a job interview.

The Emily Post Institute coaches that among close friends and family members an email or call is acceptable. If you have a casual relationship with a gift giver and you correspond via email regularly, an email thank you may be appropriate.

Children have been taught their manners for centuries. When upper class families had servants to help prepare and serve the food, parents had more time. Families would all “dine” together at elegantly set tables, providing the opportunity to teach and practice table manners,

Children were taught to show reverence to adults by bowing, and not interrupting. They were to stand up straight, not fidget, to stand when an adult entered the room, and not to speak unless spoken to. Although children are no longer required to bow, or curtsy, well behaved children are taught not to interrupt when adults are speaking, to stand when an elder walks into the room, and give up their seat if no others are available.

A 1980 parent survey asked ---- What is important for children to learn at the table, in addition to the “Magic Words,” Please and Thank you? The responses included: the correct use of utensils; to not bring books and toys to the table; to not make noises; and to ask permission to leave. Now, you can add to that list, to NOT text, at the table! ---- Remember how, nine year old, Amy Carter, created a manners outcry, when she was spotted reading a book, at the table during a formal state dinner?

Very few children are learning their manners in a “formal” setting today. Table etiquette and manners in general have changed due in part to: media portrayal of bad manners; the family unit being broken up; parents working longer hours; increased activities; just “no time;” the

advancements in technology; and treating our children as “friends” ----
not to mention the proliferation of fast food restaurants since
McDonald’s came on the scene in the 1950’s. Our LIFESTYLE has
become VERY CASUAL! The occasions are rare now when a family will
sit down, face each other at the dinner table, have a conversation, and
not get up and leave before everyone has finished their meal!

Should we return to the use of the limerick? “Mable, Mabel, brave and
able, keep your elbows off the table” ---- might not be a bad idea, after
all I learned French vocabulary by limericks. “Ratatouille, ratatouille,
what’s it to you – EGG PLANT stew.”

How children address adults is a popular topic in the parenting world.
Beverly Hills Manners, founder Lisa Gache, claims that “Mr. and Mrs.
Last Name” is a dying trend, but it varies regionally. Once considered
rude to call an adult by their first name, in Southern California many
adults now prefer to be called by their first name. In the South, and
parts of the Northeast, things are more traditional and most adults
expect to be called by a title and surname. Although a title and a first

name, such as Miss Natalie or Dr. Ted, is becoming more common. In the South children are still being coached to use, Yes Ma'am, and No Sir!

Is Chivalry, the custom of courtesy to women, ---- for a man to seat a lady at the table; stand if she excuses herself; help her on with her coat; open the door for her, when getting in and out of the car, and entering and leaving a building ---- romantic practices of the past?

ALL are considered proper Social Etiquette today. The greatest change has been in the relationship between men and women toward greater equality, particularly in the business world. The "new" Business Etiquette is genderless, the chivalry expected in proper social etiquette is not appropriate in a business setting. While basic courtesy should not be abandoned, business etiquette dictates that all business associates are treated equally, as peers, regardless of gender. For example; it is not necessary for men to rise when a woman leaves the table, and women should always extend their hand for a handshake when meeting someone.

Letita Baldrige, the first social secretary to Jackie Kennedy, felt one of her greatest accomplishments was being the first to tell women making

it in the corporate world how to do it ---- “To realize that you can’t have both the code of chivalry and an equal paycheck.” AND ---- Joan Baez is credited with saying, “If I have a baby in one arm and a guitar in the other, I’m not going to say no to a man who offers to open the door for me.”

In modern society, who opens the door? ---- The person nearest to it!

At the dawn of the 21st century the Mavens of Manners, have expanded beyond preaching about proper Social Etiquette, to include Business Etiquette, and now, Netiquette. Netiquette covers the rules for emails, participating in on line forums, navigating social media, and the use of cell phones. Businesses, hospitals and universities are employing etiquette trainers. These etiquette coaches show people how to dress, act, eat, and converse in public. They learn about everything from entertaining, and how to give an effective presentation, to cubicle etiquette.

Many companies do interviews over a meal to see how prospective employees handle themselves in social situations. The meal can also be an indicator of how someone might handle themselves in certain job

situations. In 1834, to quote AGOGOS, “Nothing indicates a well-bred man more than a proper mode of eating his dinner. A man may pass muster by dressing well, and may sustain himself tolerably in conversation; but if he is not perfectly au fait (up to date), dinner will betray him.” Karen Hickman, Fort Wayne’s Maven of Manners, and owner of Professional Courtesy, writes a weekly column in the News Sentinel. She recently responded to a woman, who interviewed over a meal, was told she didn’t get the job, ---- BECAUSE she, salted her food before tasting it. To paraphrase Karen’s response ---- your dining skills, or lack of them, and your manners in general, say a great deal about you. They reveal who you are ---- your inner character, how you make decisions, and whether you are respectful of all people. She gives some dining etiquette skills and what message they may send – IF – ignored. Wait until everyone is seated before placing your napkin in your lap. (Shows you are aware and considerate of everyone at the table). Don’t start eating until everyone is served. (Launching into your meal before others is rude and can be perceived as being “self-centered”). Taste your food before adding salt and pepper. (Can, suggest you make hasty decisions). Be polite to the wait staff. (Being rude can be an indicator of your true character). Avoid taking cellphone calls and checking for

messages. (Being glued to your phone says the people you are with, are not as important as the calls and messages ---- put your phone on silent mode). While referring here to, business etiquette dining skills ----- ALL are appropriate social etiquette dining skills.

It has been said ---- Manners are like spices you can't make a meal of them. BUT, they add a great deal to a meal's enjoyment.

Reflecting on AGOGOS's reference to "dressing well" ---- What has become of, dressing for dinner, dressing for travel, and/or dressing for a visit to the city? Iris Apfel, a 90 year old New York City style icon, reflects on the 1950s and 60s. "In those days, you wouldn't even THINK about walking down Fifth Avenue without being impeccably dressed, and now everyone looks like they're going to take a big bath! With their flip-flops and T-shirts, they're sort of half dressed."

In Conclusion

Good public manners have changed over the generations, are they wrong, or just new standards for new generations? Every generation has a set of spoken and unspoken values considered good public manners. Confusion arises when multiple generations have different

standards. So is loud cell phone use, out of control children, baseball caps in restaurants, the failure to open doors for others ---- bad public manners or simply different generational standards?

The future Mavens of Manners, and History will be the judge!

While the roles and expectations of adults and children have evolved to meet the changes in social and cultural traditions, good manners remain rooted in the guiding principles of ---- RESPECT, KINDNESS, CONSIDERTAIION, and HONESTY!

To quote Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Manners are the Happy way of doing things” ---- BE HAPPY!

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