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Introduction

"The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third class carriages, and one soul is as good as another."

George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion

Etiquette / Etiket/ noun "the customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group"

The New Oxford Dictionary of English

What manner of book is this, you might ask. It is, very simply, a book on manners. A little book on social graces and etiquette. A pocket edition of your own finishing school.

And, regardless of deft or daffy definitions, this little book will change your life style forever.



1. Social graces and you

SAID GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, "A gentleman is someone who never insults someone else intentionally".

Tongue in cheek though it may seem, it brings us to the question of what is "etiquette." Contrary to certain peoples' beliefs that manners are a collection of rules set by the snobbish elite to make everyone feel out of place, etiquette is simply a way of life. It is the way civilized people behave in company, to minimise conflict.

These are no laws. Nor rules. They are a voluntary system of behaviour. They have evolved from basic decency.

Good manners are not a sign of weakness. They indicate strength of character.

Widely and incorrectly considered a social barrier, good manners are what keep society intact.



Little magic words

PLEASE, THANK YOU, I'm sorry, you are right, I could be wrong, it's ok, you are welcome, may I help you? is something wrong?... The list of magic words is endless.

Follow the dictates of your heart and conscience and the words will surface right.

Beyond the Ps and Qs of life, there are other ways too of getting things done – in style. And the way you want to. Get away with finesse. Get your way with finesse.

- Appreciate and applaud. People may deny it, but everybody loves appreciation.
- Apologise. It's not a sign of weakness. It shows strength of character. To know when you are wrong and to admit it.
- Honour order. Do not cut into queues, barge out of turn into waiting rooms, or even cut into a dance.
- Check numbers before you dial. Small though it may seem, calling wrong numbers is an offence in etiquette. Do have the grace to apologise if you do.
- Never acknowledge or prolong obscene calls. Ignore them.



- Pay compliments without gushing.
- Accept compliments with grace.
- Never ever solicit compliments with leading questions.
- Confessions are okay in a religious context...do not bare your soul to all and sundry. It is in poor taste.
- Avoid involved conversations with strangers. Likewise discourage children from doing so too.
- Never interrupt conversations.
- Cultivate the art of listening.

The gift of the gab

CONVERSATION IS AN art, listening is a fine art.

Never lose sight of that. The art of conversation lies in making others feel that they are the centre of your attention, a position most find highly flattering.



Starting a conversation

THE EASIEST WAY TO start up a conversation is to talk about the place where you are; the reason for that meeting, or a common friend. You don't have to talk a lot to be polite. Just say a few interesting things, get the conversation going, and then pay attention. It would help to maintain eye contact.

Here are the basic CATS of conversation!

- Compliment Others
- Ask After Others
- Tend To Positive Words And Comments
- Smile

“Have you finished yet?”

NEVER MONOPOLISE A conversation. Avoid telling long-winded stories of personal victories and experiences. First person tales tend to stale in a couple of minutes. Be sensitive to your company.



Cutting in

INTERRUPTING CONVERSATIONS IS rude. It is quite inexcusable. No matter how enthusiastic you feel about something, never cut in, unless you are screaming 'fire' or 'murder'. If a person walks into a group, finish with the introductions and get back to the same topic. Changing the topic will leave the original speaker embarrassed or irritated.

Faux pas

NEVER EVER HARP on how much you dislike certain foods, beverages, people or events. There may be people in your midst who love the same things. Imagine proclaiming that a certain dish was the wrong one to serve at a party, and then see it on your host's table! Why choke? Think before making sweeping statements.





On putting your foot down ...on another's

IT IS VERY BAD manners to rudely contradict a person while in conversation. Even if you disagree, try let it pass. If it is important enough to take up, then quietly say, " Could you have been misinformed...? I have reliable information that ..." and then make your point gently.

Never burst out with " But that isn't true," or worse still, " That's a lie."

Never interrupt. However eager you are to make something known, you should wait until the person who is speaking, has finished.

Be up-to-date

READ A LOT. Be aware of current affairs. Make newspapers your staple. No one can keep a conversation going based on limited knowledge and personal strong opinions.

Lastly, keep your wits about you. And your wit too. More than anything else learn to take a joke and laugh at yourself.



The knowledgeable boor ... or bore.

IF PEOPLE WANT your opinion on something, they will ask for it. Nothing kills a conversation like someone droning on about their area of expertise. Cultivate the art of listening. Let others have their say. Silence is dignity.

Tone down?

A MELODIOUS, PLEASANT tone of voice is far more pleasing to the ear than a harsh voice, or the words of one who speaks in a monotone.

Loud talking and raucous laughing are the marks of the uncultured.

Those who speak rather loudly tend to be regarded as ignorant or hard of hearing.

At the same time, speaking in a whisper, particularly for the purpose of excluding others from a conversation or a confidential aside, is exceptionally rude.



If there are matters which must be communicated privately, there is almost always a better time and place to do so, than while in the company of more than just the two who are communicating privately.

Never argue. Folks of good breeding or good manners are expected to yield a point rather than to argue it, so long as it is purely a matter of conversation.

Always refrain from explaining any expression or word you may use unless asked to do so.

Unsolicited advice is not to be offered, and flattery is to be avoided as it makes the flatterer identifiable with the flattery - empty and false.

Unless a gathering is political or religious in nature, it is considered impolite to introduce the topics of religion or politics.

Avoid the use of slang terms and phrases in polite company.

Always ask - never tell. "Could you please pass that book?" is far better than "Pass that book, please." Which sounds surly.

Remember that there is a silence that is more flattering than a volume of compliments. Do not regard all silences as awkward moments that need to be filled with your first thought.



Don't play foul

NEVER, UNDER ANY circumstances, use bad language in public or in any place where ladies are present. A lady should never use swear words under any circumstances.

It's only words

HAVE A WAY with words? Use them well.

Words can work wonders. They can wreak havoc too. Express yourself well. Be clear. Know when to talk and when to listen. Speech, they say is silver. But silence, gold.

Don't say things that make you want to disappear into the bowels of the earth the minute you utter them. Watch your vocabulary. It can give away the kind of person you really are. Good or bad.

And when words fail, express yourself still. There are as many ways as there are individuals. A glance, a pat, a handshake, a warm hug and more. It doesn't help to withhold feelings. Say it all in any way that seems right. Communication and Expressions are all about building relationships. Build yours right.



Can you spare the time?

TIME CAN BE likened to money. It can be used, abused, misused. It can be stolen. We can go broke. Yes. How often have we felt at a total loss for time? It's because we squander or allow others to steal our precious time. And how often do we steal others' time!

One of the easiest ways to be socially gracious is to ask someone if you can have some of their time, before you take it. "Do you have a minute to talk?" or "Is this a good time to talk?" or "Please let me know if you're busy ...". There are hundreds of ways to ask the simple question, "Can you spare me some time?" If they can't, you can then understand and no feelings are hurt, no time is lost; you don't become a time-stealer and the other person respects your professionalism.

Nice and rude

THERE IS A golden rule in etiquette: Don't be rude to the rude person. However hard it may be, never be rude to a rude person. When someone barges into a queue, makes irritating conversation or farmyard noises, or confronts you with attitude, all you want to do is retaliate. Challenging though it is, this is the time to be polite. You certainly may stand up for yourself in a firm calm manner. You may let people know that they have hurt your feelings or sentiments with their behaviour, but you must express this with utmost civility.



Face facts

REMEMBER THE NIGHT out at the best restaurant in town? The table by your side and the well-dressed couple?

Their hushed tones and polite demeanour? The volume of their conversation might have been low – but their facial expressions, those grotesque spasms spoke volumes, didn't they? Watch out. This could happen to any of us. To the best of us, at the worst of times and in the worst possible situations. So, let's face facts. Our faces are a great giveaway.

Neither glare nor stare

IT IS EXTREMELY bad manners to turn round and stare at a person, either in the street or in any public place. It is equally improper to glower and glare at family and friends in public. As for glaring at strangers, it's quite unacceptable.



Ring no wrong

COLLECT YOUR THOUGHTS before making a call.

Greet the person who picks up the call. Ask for the person you want to speak to, and identify yourself. State the purpose of your call concisely, immediately. Thank the person who took your call when your purpose has been met. If you have intruded into someone's day by dialling a wrong number, it is your mistake.

The least you can do is to apologise. Do so gracefully.

Be equally graceful in receiving an apology for a wrong number.



2. Potpourri for propriety

A sense of time

IF YOU ARE naturally absent minded, do maintain an appointment diary. Don't forget to look into it, because wasting people's time, not keeping appointments, and forgetting commitments is not quite proper, you know.

Where did you buy that?

IF YOU WISH to compliment a person on their attire or accessories, never ever say "Love those shoes. Where did you buy them?"

This is no compliment - for several reasons. First, the compliment is not directed at the person - it's directed at their shoes! Second, by your asking where they bought them, they are put in an uncomfortable position of divulging their shopping habits and price range.

A compliment should be toward the person, not an inanimate item. Try " These shoes look great on you." Now, that's a compliment.



Don't be a barge...

WHEN A VISIT is as welcome as a flat tyre on a highway.

Everybody is hard pressed for time these days - it's quite okay to let your friends and folks know that you prefer not to be surprised.

Plain speaking without rudeness is the key to communication.

If they are truly friends, they will understand exactly what you mean. So avoid riddles and gentle hints.

We often sugarcoat our messages when they are not pleasant or easy, so don't expect others to pick up your meaning from implied signals. It doesn't help - or work.

Even after your request, if you still are surprised – well, diplomacy is in order. Unannounced guests do deserve kindness, even if the visit is annoying.

Some people just don't think. That doesn't mean that you have to jettison your plans though. For example, you can ask the visitor to come along with you if you're on your way out. Or, if that wouldn't work, simply say, "I'm just on my way to a meeting or I'd rather stay."



Lead by example. Make sure you set a good example yourself by never showing up unexpectedly at your friends' homes - even if they are the ones who interrupt you. So, when there is an urge to barge in, stop right there. It's not quite right, you know.

Striking matches

YOU MAY BE in a happy relationship. You may want the world to be as happy as you are. Good though your intentions may be, do realise that match making is not to be dabbled in as a past time.

Don't try to pair off your two best friends. They may not get along well together. Why embarrass them?

At every social gathering don't assume that every stag is looking out for a doe or a dear! They may be revelling in their freedom and solitude. Not every single woman is regretting her status. She may be happily single by choice. Unless you know the person very well, never get into relationship deals.



Neither a borrower nor a lender be

... for loan oft loseth both itself and friend.
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry."
--Shakespeare

- You may be the best of friends. But borrowing is often the beginning of the end.
- God forbid, you are unable to remain credit worthy, will you duck when you see your friend? Will you avoid 'phone calls and spend sleepless nights over a good relationship gone awry?
- Lending too comes with its share of burdens.
- The intention to help is rapidly replaced by a feeling of having been led up the garden path. A sense of betrayal. " Will she, won't she...return the loan? " Soon becomes, " Is she, isn't she, ...my best friend? " What a pity!





Sorting out differences

IT HELPS TO have some basic ground rules in togetherness and differences too.

Stick to the subject. It doesn't help to bring out all the simmering resentments and unforgiven wrongs that you have been storing up. Wise advice is to deal with each of these on a daily basis. Never go to bed angry, without saying sorry or forgiving. Then you'll never have anything more than a day old to drag into any conflict.

Do not be abusive.

Try to use "I" statements rather than "you" statements. In that way you can share your opinions and feelings and take responsibility for them, instead of blaming your partner for everything.

Remember to listen. An argument should be two sided. Give your companion the courtesy of listening to his/her point of view and feelings.

Don't interrupt. Let them have their say. Don't assume you know what they are going to say.

Don't switch off.



Your face and body language can communicate as much as your words, so be aware that your companion will be reading them as much as hearing your words.

And in togetherness, all we need to say is -

Respect privacy. It certainly isn't secrecy. So allow solitude into shared spaces.

Address your dress sense

IS IT TRUE that once you get dressed you never really have to look at yourself again? On the other hand, it's amazing how many people observe us each day; co-workers, people on the roads, on public transport, in lines, at the mall...

What we wear does say a lot about us. Does our wardrobe say the right thing?

The clothes that one wears leave an important impression. It is extremely important for one to dress appropriately at all times

Formal attire should be worn for formal occasions, and informal attire should be worn for informal occasions. Most often, an invitation to a dance or a dinner party that one will receive will specify whether the event calls for formal, semi-formal, or informal attire.

Some situations require the use of simple common sense. One must be prepared to dress correctly for many situations. Most of us have our own interpretation of formal and casual in terms of Indian clothing. Go with your style and taste.

Besides being dressed properly, it is imperative that a great deal of importance is given to proper hygiene. Always be sure that your body, skin, and hair reflect your sense of self-worth.

Once you are suitably garbed in the correct comfortable clothes for the occasion, stop fidgeting. Readjusting saree pleats and fall, buttoning and unbuttoning, using safety pins to fasten... these are a sure no-no.





3. Don't make a spectacle of yourself

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF affection...

Don't be affected. Be natural...and decent.

- Most cultures accept hugging, albeit briefly, while greeting and parting.
- Kissing on both cheeks is a European custom. With others, it does look affected.
- While a quick kiss is ok, long displays of affection are nauseating.
- The British shake hands. Others can too.
- Holding hands in public is accepted these days.
- Keep a distance from strangers. Just shake hands if you need to.
- A quick peck on the cheek when you meet relatives is all right.
- Don't embarrass kids. Particularly the older ones. They hate public display of affection
- As for couples...even in seclusion, public display of affection cannot be the rule.
- At work, no matter how close you are, greet colleagues from a polite distance.



Raleigh around ladies...

THE AGE OF chivalry is not past. Not yet. Do your bit to keep it going.

“ A lady is a woman around whom a man behaves as a gentleman.”

- Hold the door open for ladies...
- In elevators and escalators, ladies first.
- The gentleman walks ahead of the lady coming down the stairs.
- The gentleman walks on the outer side – the roadside - to protect a lady from traffic hazards. And splashes.
- The taller person holds the umbrella. Gender regardless.
- A gentleman removes his hat in the presence of ladies, unless religious beliefs prevent it.
- Military men in uniform must, too.
- Men do not wear hats indoors. Here again, religious practices are exceptions.
- A firm handshake is a symbol of peace and friendship. To refuse a handshake is rude.



- Gentlemen rise when a lady enters a room
- In a restaurant, a gentleman follows a lady to the table.
- A gentleman precedes a lady to the car or door of theatres and cinema halls, to open the door.
- Priority is always for the older person, pregnant woman, and a person managing very young children.

Getting to know you...

THE ART of introduction.

On social occasions there is a definite order to be followed in introducing people.

The gentleman is presented to the lady, not vice versa.

The younger person is introduced to the older person.

Never assume first name terms as soon as you are introduced.

What happens when you know a person, but oops! you don't remember his name? The old trick is to say, "Okay every body please introduce yourselves." Not exactly brilliant, but might work.



And then the other gimmick... "How do you spell your name?" and when he says " Tom" and looks puzzled...well, you've just asked for it!

Bluffs generally backfire. Come clean. "I'm sorry. I'm just not able to remember your name...?" and the moment of awkwardness will soon pass.

May I present to you...

MANY OF US, no matter how well educated or socially savvy we are, get concerned with this whole introduction thing. Who do I introduce, and to whom? What if I forget someone's name? How do I not embarrass myself?

When you are speaking to someone, he/she is the 'most important person' at that time. Don't fret about who is older, more important financially, or all the other things that can clutter the mind. When a different person approaches the two of you, simply smile and say, "Hi! It's so nice to see you, may I present you to ..."

Then of course you reverse the introduction as usual. Include the new arrival, but never forget you were engaged in a previous conversation, and respect that person's standing.



Taboo topics

CERTAIN TOPICS ARE not suitable for discussion in public or in large mixed gatherings. To open up such issues would be considered uncouth.

- A person's age
- Salary or wages
- Designation, job profile in detail
- Promotions and intra-office matters
- Marital and sexual issues
- Extra marital issues
- Terminal illness
- Financial crunches
- Personal remarks on appearance and dress sense
- Personal and family related details that are meant to be confidential
- Official contracts and confidential matters



All the world is not your stage...

FREEDOM OF SPEECH is fine. As long as it does not hurt the sentiments of others. There are certain topics that are taboo. And certain places where loud and complex conversations are best avoided.

It is inappropriate to hold discussions with strangers in public rest rooms and waiting areas, elevators and corridors of public buildings, public transport, shops and malls, cafés and restaurants, theatres and stadiums, art galleries and museums, book stores and newsstands.

There is an exception to this rule, however. When a major common event has made the headlines, etiquette takes the back seat and human need to express opinions surfaces. It's okay as long as controversies do not result.





4. The fine art of dining...

Repondez s'il vous plait
Please, please do respond!

R.S.V.P. IS FRENCH for 'répondez s'il vous plait', which means "please do respond."
– to invitations.

- This is an area where people have become the most lax - and rude.
- Even those who call and confirm cannot be counted on to attend.
- If you have accepted and are unable to attend, notify the host as soon as possible.
- Unfortunately, people do not take R.S.V.Ps seriously. They just do not respond and then show up assuming that the hosts know they are coming. This is rude and inconsiderate by any standards.
- Everyone has a party-horror story to share. Do not become part of someone's horror story.
- Do respond within three to five days of receiving an invitation.
- The attendee's count affects the food and beverage orders.
Do, please do be considerate



Let moods soar, not sour

WINE AND DINE by the rules...

The table is set. Beautiful. Dinner's ready. Delicious.

But you don't want your party turning sour now, do you?

You've just been invited to dinner, yes, of the very formal kind. What do you do?

When you are invited to someone's home, bring along a token of your appreciation. It can be as simple as a jar of homemade jam or as elaborate as a fine bottle of wine. To the hosts, it is a sign that you care.

And when you get there, do be a fine guest.





Round the table rites

- NAPKIN ORIGAMI? No, please. Don't mistake your folded napkin creation for a centerpiece. Always place it in your lap. Never shake it out or use it as a handkerchief. Worse, face flannel!
- As soon as you sit down, place your napkin on your lap. If you need to be excused, place your napkin directly to the left of your dinner plate, not on your chair.
- Posture is important. Always sit straight up in your chair, leaning neither backward nor forward.
- Never let your elbows touch the table, though you can put your hands on the table all you want.
- Always stand up when anyone approaches your table or new guests are seated.



No overloads –

- It isn't "first come, first served." Always be patient and wait until everyone has been served.
- If you have a special diet, let your host know in advance. This is better than leaving food uneaten.
- Avoid heaping your plate with food at one shot.
- Go for second helpings and keep them small.
- When you are serving yourself, never pile excessive food on your plate. Avoid overeating.
- Slurping, smacking or otherwise eating food in a noticeably audible or visible manner is never pleasant.
- Do not slurp soup or blow on hot foods and beverages.
- When eating, do not bring your face toward the plate, but bring the plate up to you.
- Also, never talk with food in your mouth.
- "No poking unless choking." In most cases, dislodging stubborn food particles from your teeth is forbidden at the table. Discretion is the key - so excuse yourself and leave the room.



- Insult to injury or salt on wounds? Never season your food before tasting it. Seasoning your food will show a lack of confidence in the chef and is an insult your host.
- Compliments about food should be subtle, not overblown.
- Avoid the cold handshake. Hold your cold drink in your left hand and keep your right hand dry and free for a warm hand shake.
- Hold your wineglass by the stem, not the rim.
- Be careful not to leave fingerprints or lip-prints on glassware. If you do, discreetly remove them with your napkin.
- If you must blow your nose, excuse yourself from the table.
- Mealtime is no call time. Let it ring. Or cut it off. Avoid taking calls during meals, particularly on cell phones. Accepting calls while in the company of guests serves as an insult. If you absolutely must take a call, excuse yourself and move away from the table.



Keep pace

RELAX AND ENJOY time with others.

The food is not going to walk away. So take your time! Don't fill your mouth with too much food. Try to keep the same eating pace as your host, so that you all finish at the same time. It is not a compliment when someone leans over and says "You must've been hungry" or, "Any problem? Not to your taste?"

Dip and dunk

"WHENEVER FOOD IS served with dips and sauces, there are rules to be followed. This will ensure that all diners get to enjoy their food without any qualms or getting queasy!

Whatever should be dipped into any sauce, ketchup, salsa, dressing and so on should be dipped in only once.

It is inappropriate (and unsanitary) to put something that has been in one's mouth, back into a common dip.



Finish with a flourish

- You should never let any cutlery, once used, ever touch the table again. This includes leaning a fork onto the plate, or using a knife and putting it back in its original place.
- Don't push your plate away when you're done eating. Wait until all are through.
- Sit in an attitude of attentiveness to your host and other guests, with both feet on the floor, not crossed. And never play with your silverware.
- Leaving? After the dinner or party, keep the hosts in mind, and leave at an appropriate time.
- And always remember to thank the host. Showing gratitude is the key to being a gracious guest. A handshake and a polite "Thank you" provide an adequate conclusion to the occasion.
- Follow up. Always send a "Thank you" note the next day. If you just cannot find the time for this, call the next day and express your appreciation.



The Zen of playing hostess

THE KEY TO being a good hostess is to be in a clear and calm frame of mind. Never entertain for the sake of entertaining. " O my God! They've called us over thrice. Now it's my turn." It doesn't work that way. Only entertain when you have the time, energy and mind set to be pleasing and to enjoy yourself.

- Your job as hostess is to relax, see that food and drink are aplenty, get people to talk together and keep the music and magic going.
- Make your guest list interesting. Think and plan before you call. Bring interesting groups together. Mix old friends and new. Create an event that will be remembered as a meeting of minds and tastes.
- While it's okay to call people by telephone, a formal gathering deserves a more elegant approach. Like a hand-written invitation. E-mail is only for casual get togethers.
- Lighting and music should create an ambience that relaxes the guests.
- You can't go wrong with candles. Avoid aroma candles though. Not everyone likes them.
- Look your best. Not for the others. That too, but mostly, for yourself.
- Seat people cleverly to keep conversations balanced.



- Food must be good, but definitely not the focus of the evening.
- Nothing is more boring than a sharing of recipes at a formal dinner.
- Worse yet is the hostess who fusses in the kitchen right through.
- When accidents happen...the spill, the fall, or the oops of any kind, make light of it, deal with it. Don't dwell on it.
- When it's all over, do thank your guests for coming over.
- See them to the door.

Cocktail or mocktail?

TRADITIONALLY, A COCKTAIL party is a pre-dinner gathering where the guests enjoy a couple of drinks and accompaniments. Today, it is an event in itself, although dinner is still not served. Dress codes are in, and planning is in order.

Do specify the time and try and stick to it, else you might be embarrassed by lingering, hungry guests.

Have a critical mass of people and enough drinks to go round.

Serve the right type of finger foods. Salty is better than sweet.



Do have non-alcoholic drinks, soda and punch for those who wish to abstain.

Leave small plates and suitable cutlery around. Paper and paper napkins must be handy.

Do not assume that plain old water is not necessary. Leave plenty of it around.

Play some music. Vary it according to the crowd and mood. Keep it soft.

Encourage movement in the room. Huddling is for football teams.

Keep the conversation flowing with the spirits. Soar high!

Don't burn the toast

PROPOSING A TOAST has come of age and stepped out of the wedding banquet scenario. Even a small gathering of friends now propose toasts to the occasion...it maybe just to celebrate their togetherness.

To propose, accept and partake of a toast is rather more than a casual clinking of glasses. Here's how you do it right.



- The host always proposes the first toast.
- If there is conversation on, the host may ask for silence or gently tap his wine glass to still the voices.
- A toast should be short and simple.
- The person proposing the toast usually stands and addresses the honouree.
- Other guests may remain seated and raise their glasses.
- Those who are not drinking wine may raise their glass of anything else, except water. Even an empty glass is acceptable.
- Raising a glass of water or not raising one's glass would be considered downright rude.
- The honouree sits and accepts the toast ...he doesn't "drink to himself."
- He may respond with his own toast.
- In large gatherings, only those that are seated close to the honouree or are on a dais need partake of the toast.



To clink or not to clink

A TOAST HAS been proposed. To clink or not to clink, you haven't a clue.

Here's help.

Large groups do not clink their glasses during toasts.

Individuals may touch their wine glasses together if they so wish. Superstition suggests that the glasses be "clinked" at unequal height, never at the same level.

If those raising their glasses in a toast are seated too far apart to clink, the raising itself is sufficient.

Now that you have the basics, clink, don't blink.





Table for two...or more

TAKING PEOPLE OUT to dine ought to be a pleasant experience for all concerned. Just take a few easy steps ahead of time and then ...enjoy.

When you know that a place is popular, make reservations well ahead.

Specify the number of guests and any special preferences or needs.

If you need to cancel a booking, do it in time.

The establishment will appreciate that and perhaps remember you on later occasions. As a considerate client.

At the restaurant, never wave or snap for attention.

Never cause disturbances...no matter what the apparent provocation.

Keep children in their places...literally too.

It's okay to ask for a translation if the menu has dishes listed in an alien language.

Remember to thank for good service.

If you need to sign a guest book, don't be overly critical - unless there is a drastic need to point out something. Do compliment generously



Dining dilemma 1: Where to go to eat?

THIS OF COURSE has to do with who is doing the inviting, where you met the person and other considerations like if there are certain foods the other person can't eat. The best way to handle this dilemma is to offer several choices to the invitee. Whoever is inviting always pays the bill so get that straight right up front.

Dining dilemmas 2: What to order?

Etiquette rules state that you always have your guest order first.

That's where the confusion comes in. What are you expected to order?

Something special, reasonable or ...what? Here's how to handle the situation.

Ask the host what they would recommend. That puts the ball in the host's court!

The host of the meal could then offer about three selections in the appropriate price range, to help out the invitee.



Tip 'em in your favour

TIPS...ARE THEY the icing on the cake ...or the cake itself? People, who serve us in so many ways, very often depend on tips, not just as a bonus, but as bread and butter.

Tips can be expanded to read "To Insure Prompt Service" ...and is often a token of appreciation.

To tip or not to tip is often a dilemma. If tips are in order, then, how much to tip? Oft asked questions with very simple guidelines, that work the world over.

- At restaurants, 10 –15% of the bill value is acceptable as gratuity.
- When your host forgets to tip, do leave a discreet amount behind.
- Guests need not tip the servants of the house, but a token given discreetly would always be welcome.
- When a service provider owns the place and serves you, as in a beauty salon, you need not tip the owner of the establishment. You can remember to give her a small gift on a special occasion.
- Club employees are used to random tipping but 10 – 15% is a reasonable option.
- Door delivery personnel would appreciate a small token. Again, the value of the product delivered would have a bearing on the tip.
- Service providers in buildings get an official salary, but do appreciate a tip particularly during festivals or your family functions.
- Medical service providers are often discouraged from accepting tips. A common gratuity fund may be available in this case.



5. Sharing space ... sensitively

Guestiquette ...on being good house guest

GUESTS, LIKE LITTLE children, should be seen and not heard. They should be as unobtrusive as possible, and cheerful comfortable company when in demand.

Never take over the campsite. Whether it is a guestroom or a make-shift accommodation, do keep your belongings neatly stashed away. Not strewn all over to establish an atmosphere of informal disarray.

Regardless of the presence of domestic help, guests should make their own beds and do their own laundry with minimum possible fuss or fracas.

The toilet can tell tales about you. Watch out.

Never use the telephone without permission, and then, never stay on the line forever. Never ever make long distance calls on another's account.

The host's children, pets and property have "right-of-say and stay." Respect that.

Never make drastic changes to your host's schedule or routine. Conform and adjust.

Always offer to help in the kitchen, around the house, shopping, or dropping and picking up.



When you damage something, own up and offer to pay. Right away.

Stick to regular timings. Do not assume that you can walk in and out of someone's house at your whim and fancy.

When you leave, leave them with pleasant memories of your stay. You can reinforce that with a small thoughtful gift.

Roomie rights...and wrongs

REGARDLESS OF WHAT TV shows such as "Friends" portray, having roommates is just like having brothers and sisters all over again, except without parents around to referee.

Roommates could be people forced for economic reasons to dwell together in college dorms, shared apartments or other arrangements.

Therefore, to reduce the risk of mass murder, certain niceties should be observed:

- Never use up the last can of coke or the last yard of toilet paper.
- Save all receipts and put your initials on the stuff you pay for.
- Everybody can settle up at the end of the month.



- Don't stay in the bathroom for more than fifteen minutes.
- Rotate doing the chores, or pay to hire someone else to do them.
- Never answer the phone rudely.
- If you use the last of something, buy more of it (unless it's something nobody liked anyway)
- Put things back where they belong, rather than where you found them.
- Always clean up after you and your guests party.
- Settle all personality disputes immediately to prevent sulking.

Making and mending fences

WHILE IT'S GOOD to know your space and that of your neighbours', and stay within your limits, there are certain civilities that convert good neighbours into friends. Just like good fences, good bridges too are necessary.

- Long years ago, merchants would greet new neighbours with a "welcome wagon" load of goodies. To make them feel at home. This was in the days when men had time for each other.
- Now, when we hardly have time for ourselves, may be we should at least refrain from a hollered out "Hey! When are going to move that truck out?"



- People move into a new neighbourhood with many a fear and doubt. A welcome smile or a cheery wave can set them at ease. That is basic courtesy.
- Those who care that little bit more can go across with an offer of a pot of tea and some cookies.
- After the move, it might be a good idea to visit with a little token of welcome - a gift of flowers, a list of shops and essential services, a few important numbers and the offer of help and friendship.
- Pets and neighbourhood wars seem related. Keep your pets' noise level down.
- Toilet training your pets is imperative.
- Keep children out of trouble and neighbours' yards. Seeking permission to pick up a stray ball must start young. Teach them courtesy.
- Loud parties and noisy families are not popular. No one may complain, but no one may like you either.
- Keep your cars and things out of others' driveways. Park right.
- Dispose of garbage sensibly.
- Respect places of worship.



- Never discuss politics in public.
- Never interfere in other people's arguments.

Strange. All these sound like basic human courtesy and decency. And yet, they are rules of etiquette. Must they become civil laws too?





6. Common sense in common areas

The sidewalk of life

THE PAVEMENT, SIDEWALK, curb or kerb ...this is the area meant for pedestrians.

Never ride bicycles on the sidewalk. Nor speed by on roller-skates or boards.

The only wheels that are allowed on the pavement, are those that belong to perambulators and wheel chairs of the physically challenged.

Avoid walking more than two or three abreast.

While a stroll or saunter may be relaxing to you, you may be the cause of a pedestrian jam. Watch your strides.

Allow others to pass.

Never force people to get down on to the road and face speeding traffic just because you think you have right of way on the pavement.

Step 'n style.



Lil' gestures that mean so much

THE OLD LADY who is trying to cross the road...

The man who cannot see ...

The lady with a child in tow and another on her shoulders, carrying a grocery bag too...

The shortsighted gent peering at a bus number...

The school children wondering when to dart across the road...

The youngster who cleans your windscreen to make an honest living...

The limping stray dog...

The terminally ill lady in the hospices...

The sick, the bereaved, the needy...

This list is endless too.

Reach out. A kind word, a thoughtful deed, a warm smile or gentle touch...

Little gestures matter. They are the manners of the soul.



Before and after ... bus truths

A GENTLEMAN NEVER pushes in front of a woman in order to get on to the bus first. The young and healthy should be ready to give up their seats to the old, the ill, and to a mother with a baby. Gender is not the issue here. A young girl should not accept a seat from an old man, even if he offers it.

Manners at the Wheel

HAVE YOU EVER noticed, while driving on the highway, that some drivers give a gentle honk when you allow them to pass or overtake you? These are perhaps a few of those who are aware that there are road manners.

Yes - apart from traffic rules, by which we are legally bound, we are morally bound by road etiquette too. If he could, the driver in front of you would move - so, why honk madly? Where is the need to honk loudly and make a beginner nervous when an "L" sign is clearly visible? Surely, a few minutes delay is nothing.

Using the horn in prohibited areas like school compounds and hospital zones need not be rule or law - it's plain common sense and consideration.



Reckless driving, passing close to another vehicle, urging someone in front to go faster, overtaking at dangerous locations, forcing others off the road, braking abruptly, stopping to chat and blocking traffic - these are a few of the thoughtless things we do - but can easily avoid.

The famous "free turn" does NOT mean, turn as if you were blind - it means, although you are allowed to turn, do check if it is safe to turn before turning.

Shouting abuses, using crude and rude gestures when irritated, are in poor taste and show a lack of class.

Parking in a way that hinders free movement of other vehicles is not acceptable - even if you are in a great hurry.

Drive with class - you'll be noticed.





Clear the air, Jetsetter

On board

Upon entering the airplane you need to adjust to a new environment. There are regulations, weather, and mechanical delays...

Your choice is to relax.

The crew is dedicated to get you to your destination as safely and quickly as possible.

Take your seat promptly and stow your bags.

On bags and baggage

You are allowed a max of two pieces of Carry on baggage. It must fit in an overhead bin or under your seat.

Do not pressure the crew into making an exception for your bag. Safety first!

"My bag is really heavy. Could you put it in the overhead for me?"

Flight Attendant backs are no stronger than yours.



Rule of thumb, if it's too heavy for you to handle...repack before you leave.

"But it fit on the last flight."

Different types of aircraft have different types of stowage. Don't argue.

Adhere to crew directives. Belligerence on your part is against the law.

Pro passenger protocol

BE POLITE AND respectful of your fellow passengers and the crew.

Know your limits. Drunken passengers are a potential danger to all on board.

When you do have a gripe with the airline or crew, express yourself in a professional manner. The odds of a successful resolution are far better if you remain calm and polite.

The Ultimate Travel Pro knows how to help. If you notice a family has been seat separated on a full flight and trading your seat might solve the problem, make the offer. Your assistance will be appreciated.



Let time fly by peacefully

NEVER...

- Grab the back of a seat as you get up or down disturbing a fellow passenger who is enjoying a nap, reading or drinking hot coffee.
- Recline your seat with great force without notice, or a cautionary look before hitting the person behind you in the forehead ...
- Hog the arm rests, and sometimes taking up a part of the next seat as well
- Play your Walkman at full volume.
- Leave the lavatory looking like the airplane just hit severe turbulence
- Stand in front of the movie screen
- Ask what drinks are on the drinks cart
- Stand behind a flight attendant working a cart hoping that it will miraculously disappear, so they can get by
- Repeatedly talk to someone who is working, reading a great novel, or using a personal electronic device
- Pretend that you are world travellers and experts on air travel.



- Cut lines at check in like you they have some divine right...
- Stand up immediately before the seat belt sign goes off in an attempt to get off the plane quicker and finding 100 people doing the same thing.
- When disembarking, stop on the gangway outside the airplane door to wait for your companion, thus causing a bottle neck

The crew and you

IT'S NOT JUST the crew who should smile and be pleasant because it's part of their job. You should too! Try it, it's contagious and it feels good!

On your next flight try greeting the crew before they greet you...with a smile and a "How are you folks doing today?". When being served look the Flight Attendants in the eye and thank them sincerely. At the end of your flight bid farewell and tell them how great the service was.



7. Subtle scenario

Concert conduct

DO ARRIVE ON time for concerts, shows and events. Fumbling, stumbling, even tumbling in the dark is annoying to the rest of the audience. No one likes people squeezing past, groping blindly and sitting on their laps, albeit inadvertently. Arriving on time when the lights are on can save you embarrassment and the others, discomfort.

Switch off pagers and mobile phones. Some sensible auditoriums levy fines for cell phone menace.

Never leave mid way unless it is an emergency. Do not push past people to exit first.

Never stand up to see or hear better. There are others behind you who cannot see through you. Never save seats for latecomers. It is rude to make people stand, while you reserve a seat for people who are so disinterested that they cannot come on time.

After a performance, wait until each row clears and your turn comes. A few minutes later shouldn't matter.



Clap trap

APPLAUDING APPROPRIATELY IS an art...

Have you ever been embarrassed, clapping loudly at a concert during a pause in the performance thinking that the piece had concluded? Avoid concert faux pas.

- High-brow fare such as classical recitals, operas and ballets are a class apart. Literally. Applauding during every lull and after every solo is most inappropriate.
- Jazz allows freedom of appreciation. Clap along. Foot tap. Enjoy.
- Valedictory functions and graduations are a matter of personal pride. Do remember though, your youngster expects you to be dignified! Gentle applause is in order. Don't jump up and down like you are at the stadium watching rugby.
- Weddings, devotional gatherings, prayer meetings and more sober occasions are exactly what they are - sober. Do not applaud.
- After a stellar performance, if you feel with it, stand up for an ovation. If you did not like the performance, don't stand up in hypocritical tandem with the mob.
- Award ceremonies, like graduations are professional in nature. Wait for the speakers to finish and applaud gently. A lifetime achievement award deserves a standing ovation.



Respecting the sacred

PROPER BEHAVIOUR AT places of worship - whether it is a mosque, temple, gurudwara, church or any spiritual centre - is a combination of basic good manners, cultural sensitivity, and respect for the sanctity of the place.

- First, don't worry too much!
- If you are unsure about what is appropriate in an unfamiliar cultural situation, it is perfectly acceptable to ask.
- Of course, careful observation also helps. Just do what the others do or close your eyes in of silence, hands still or in a respectful gesture of worship.
- It is very important to dress appropriately. Shorts, T-shirts, and other overly casual clothing should be completely avoided.
- Clothes should be modest.
- For most situations legs and upper arms should be covered.
- In some situations, long hair is best tied back.
- Try to retain a posture indicating attentiveness.
- Note that pointing one's feet toward the altar or teacher is regarded as disrespectful. Avoid extending your legs.
- If you need to stretch your legs, be sure to point your feet away from other people and sacred objects.
- Avoid smoking, public displays of affection, loud talking, boisterous laughter and physical contact.
- Be mindful of body language, especially around members of the opposite sex.
- If you wish, you may bring flowers or fruit as an offering to Hindu or Buddhist temples.



- In almost all temples and churches, small offerings slipped into a donation into offering box are welcome, but not required.

Hospital honours

ARE YOU PLANNING a visit to see a loved one in the hospital or nursing home? The right kind of visitors can be just what the doctor ordered, but the wrong kind can bring more than discomfort. Unfortunately, a patient is extremely vulnerable—often confined to a room, away from the familiar environment of home and perhaps in the grip of physical discomfort and a variety of emotions. So, it's up to the visitor to be respectful by following general guidelines when visiting a loved one.





Be Welcome

THE ONLY FORMAL visitor rules established for hospitals are visiting Hours. Typically, visiting hours are during a 10 to 12 hour period, starting after morning rituals such as baths and treatments, and ending in time for evening routines and care.

This ensures patients get adequate rest for recovery and enough privacy.

Call ahead and request permission to visit and check visiting hours.

Knock or ask permission to enter.

Show up. Do not promise to visit and then not come. If you can't make it, call ahead and suggest another time.

Don't come *en masse*. Family visits should include no more than two people. Unless a child needs to visit a parent who is ill for psychological relief for either, please leave children out of hospital visits. They can be a nuisance and are prone to infections.

Keep your stay short. A 10 to 15 minute visit is long enough for someone whose endurance is low.



Stay home

IF YOU HAVE an upper respiratory tract infection, don't visit. Yes. We do mean the common cold too. You're not only putting your family member, whose resistance may already be low, at risk, but you're also putting other residents and staff at risk.

Though these aren't official visitor regulations, common courtesy is necessary.

Dealing with the challenged

TACT IS THE key to communication with the challenged...

When you encounter a person with a disability of any kind, think again before you voice your thoughts, because the seemingly ordinary statement may hurt feelings and sentiments.

To get the attention of a person with a hearing loss, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly and slowly.

Shouting won't help, and it may lessen the person's ability to understand. Written notes are fine for short conversations.

When conversing with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes please sit down, in order to place yourself at the person's eye level.



When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who might be with you. Speak in a normal tone of voice. Indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another, and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.

Listen attentively when talking with a person who has speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Repeat what you have understood.

- DON'T SAY handicap, handicapped. SAY disability or person with a disability. Emphasise the person, not the disability. In fact, people now say 'differently-abled' rather than disabled.
- DON'T SAY victim of or afflicted with a stroke, polio, muscular dystrophy, etc. SAY person who has multiple sclerosis, or person who has had a spinal cord injury.
- DON'T SAY wheelchair-bound or confined to a wheelchair. SAY person who uses a wheelchair or has a wheelchair. Most people who use a wheelchair do not regard them as confining. They are viewed as liberating.

- DON'T SAY deaf and dumb. SAY person who is deaf, hearing impaired, or hard of hearing. Most deaf individuals are capable of speech. The inability to hear or speak does not indicate lower intelligence.
- DON'T SAY the deaf, the visually impaired or the disabled. SAY person who is deaf, persons with visual disabilities, persons with disabilities, etc.
- DON'T SAY spastic, Mongoloid, deformed, defective, or crippled.
- These words are offensive and demeaning.
- Use the correct term, if you know it. If you don't, remain silent until you do.

Polite in pain

DEATH IS ONE of the certainties of life.

A funeral. While there never can be the right thing to say, ever, the most simple phrase is the most effective. And sincere. "I am so sorry". Let the grieving family know that you understand what they are going through and feeling. Please do not try to engage them in a conversation too painful for them at the moment. Avoid asking for details of the passing. Remember that " At least she didn't suffer" is not exactly comforting.

Do not ask if you should come by to clean out the cupboards and rooms, or arrange for legal counsel. Let the family ask for such help when they are ready for it. Be guided by their conversation. It's often a comforting shoulder and a sympathetic ear that are the need of the hour. Sometimes, when they wish to remain silent, let them. Don't try to draw out emotions.

Certainly call after a few days to check on them.



Niceties in a nutshell

TO SUM UP, may we make it unbelievably simple?

Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. It's logical sequel being, don't do unto others what you wouldn't like anyone to do to you.

This is the basis of all courteous living.

Whether it is leaving the bathroom dry, or not pointing your fingers at a person to identify him.

Whether it is slurping at the table, or gossiping in public.

Simply follow your heart and conscience. When you know and feel that something's right, you can't be wrong, can you? That's etiquette for you.

Entwined with the very core of your being, every moment of everyday.

Here's to gracious living. Have fun with finesse.

