Manners & Etiquette

The first and most important rule of good manners is kindness and consideration to others. This rule never changes. The source of this rule is the Bible, and it is the second most important commandment next to loving God: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (MATT 22:39; MATT 19:19). Remember, knowing what is right is only part of having good manners. It is the doing that counts. (JAS 1:22; JAS 2:20; MATT 7:21)

General Good Manners

- Think of the others first. (PHIL 2:4-5; ROM 12:10)
- Be hospitable and friendly. (1.PET 4:9; ROM 12:13; PROV 18:24)
- Always say, “Thank you” - this is a way of praising others and one of the keys of good manners; not forgetting “Excuse me”, “Please”, “You are welcome”, “Hello” and “Goodbye”. (COL 3:15; 1.THESS 5:18; 3.JN 14)
- Do not be boastful, arrogant or loud - always exercise restraint. Let your deeds speak for themselves. (TIT 1:8; 1.COR 13:4-5)
- Listen before speaking. Never interrupt. Look people in the eye, and listen carefully. (JAS 1:19)
- Before speaking to others consider what effect your words will have. Don’t say thoughtless, unkind things. Pause and weigh your words carefully and say them with a “quality of softness.” (PROV 15:23; 12:25; 25:11)
- Never whisper, as it makes the person who can’t hear feel left out. (PSALM 41:7)
- Never point or stare, especially at people with disabilities or those who are “different”. (PHIL 2:3; ROM 2:11)
- Be thankful and show appreciation for gifts, help, etc. Write “thank you cards” rather than sending e-mails to show your appreciation. (COL 3:15; EPH 5:20)
- Give compliments - a fundamental rule of good manners is to give. (ACTS 20:35)
- Be considerate and do not embarrass others - treat others as you would like to be treated, and think of how you can put them at ease. Never demean anyone with rude jokes or an unwelcome nickname. (1.COR 13:4; PHIL 2:4; LK 10:27)
- Do not criticise or complain - a person with good manners is above criticizing others or complaining about circumstances. Negativity in any form is to be avoided. If you hear gossip, don’t join in, be indifferent to it. If you disagree with others, do so respectfully. Don’t verbally attack or condemn them. (1.COR 13:5-7; PHIL 2:14; EPH 4:29)
- Never be ruffled. Be a calming, happy influence in any stressful situation and maintain your composure. (PROV 16:32; PSALM 37:8)
- Respect people’s time and be punctual. If you make an appointment, arrive on time or even a bit early. If you're going to be late, always call and let them know. Never arrive early for a social engagement; your host may still be getting dressed. (EPH 5:16; MATT 5:37)
- When you give your word or promise something, then you must fulfil it; or get word to the person promised early enough that no harm is done. Your explanation as to WHY you cannot keep your promise must be perfectly acceptable and not due to your own fault. (JAS 5:12; ECCL 5:4-5)
• If you borrow something it should be treated more carefully than if it were your own. It should also be returned promptly and if possible in better-than-original condition. When someone lends you money and you owe it to return this loan, then NEVER forget or delay this payment back. (DEUT 23:21)

In Public

• Always introduce yourself and others.
• Be helpful. Open doors (regardless of gender). Men should always open doors for women. (HEB 13:16; 1.PET 3:7)
• Do not ask too many intimate or invasive questions the first few times that you meet a person. (PHIL 2:3)
• To strangers/new ones: Do not comment on personal appearances or clothes in a negative way; if you cannot say something complimentary, do not say anything at all. (PSALM 12:5; PROV 11:22)
• If you are in a mixed group, always greet the elders and the women first.
• Don’t address elders and seniors by their names, unless they have specially asked you to. Stand up when an elder or a guest enters the room and don’t sit until you’ve offered them a seat. (1.PET 5:5)
• If an elderly person enters a bus or train, the younger offers him/her a seat. (LEV 19:32)
• A man should always offer the woman to enter a room first. (1.PET 3:7)
• At a restaurant/official dinner, the man moves the chair away from the table and offers the woman her seat. (1.PET 3:7)
• When leaving a place, men should help the women to put on their coats/jackets. (1.PET 3:7)
• Girls/women should always dress modestly. (1.TIM 2:9)
• Wear a nice, clean dress on Sundays.
• Stand when the national anthem is playing. Show respect to the flag.
• Be involved in a variety of community service organizations. (MATT 5:16; TIT 2:14)

At Home / With Guests

• Introduce guests to everyone in your home. (1.PET 4:9)
• Offer something to drink (a glass of water, a cup of tea/coffee) to anyone who steps into your home/office. (HEB 13:2)
• Do not continue to watch TV or surf the net when you have a visitor.
• Lower the music or TV volume when others are talking or trying to sleep.
• Wear clean clothes at home. (GEN 35:2; LEV 6:11)
• Children should learn at a young age to help in the household and take over responsibility. (DEUT 6:7; EX 20:12)
• Children should stand up when the father or older people enter the room. They do not remain seated, e.g. in front of a TV. They should also offer the best seats. (COL 3:20)
• Goodbyes should be short and cheerful when you are the guest. If you have guests, be with them when they are leaving, making their visit pleasant to the end. (PHIL 2:3; 1.PET 4:9)

Table Manners

• Wear appropriate clothing and be presentable. Even if it is very hot never sit at the table without a shirt.
• Wash your hands before and after a meal. (EX 40:31)
• Always wait till your host tells you where to sit. Wait also until everyone else is sitting down before you sit down. If grace is said, wait to eat until it is completed. Start eating only after the host has started.
• If the meal is not buffet style, then wait until everyone is served before eating. It shows consideration. Never overload your plate as it makes you look greedy. It is better to take less and return for seconds.
• When you sit down, place the napkin on your lap.
• Sit up straight and don't slouch.
• Put both your hands on the table, but never your elbows.
• Always use a napkin to dab your mouth (remember, dab your mouth only!) Your napkin should be on your lap when not in use.
• Start with the cutlery furthest away from your plate and work yourself in towards your plate.
• Eat slowly, but keep up with your host. Also, don't fill your mouth with food - it looks gross! Do not speak or drink with your mouth full, nor lick your fingers.
• Eat with a fork unless the food is meant to be eaten with fingers, and keep your knife out of your mouth.
• When eating rolls, cut them with a knife at breakfast, but break them open with your hands at dinner before buttering.
• Slice butter from the butter dish and place it on your butter plate or other plate. The butter knife should stay with the butter dish.
• Be sure to compliment the housewife on the meal she prepared (and/or the chefs/cooks)! Don't make any negative comments that will hurt someone's feelings.
• Always say “thank you” when served something. It shows appreciation.
• You should eat what is offered on the table. \(1\text{.COR 10:27}; 1\text{.TIM 4:4}\)
• Ask for specific things you want instead of reaching out directly or pointing at dishes; don’t make too much noise. Chew with your mouth closed, and don’t talk with food in your mouth!
• When a second helping is offered, take it if you are still hungry. Never ask for more food if you are a guest.
• Excuse yourself from the table if you need to go to the bathroom. Also excuse yourself if you need to remove some food from between your teeth, blow your nose, etc! However, at an official dinner you may need to wait till your host excuses you.
• Clear your plate from the table and take it to the kitchen. Help clear the dishes (but not at an official dinner).

**Kids**

• Kids only speak if they are asked to. As a rule, kids should be seen but not heard. \(\text{COL 3:20}\)
• Kids do not interrupt if adults talk. \(\text{EPH 6:1}\)
• Fathers are often offered the better parts of the food. \(\text{1.TIM 5:17}\)
• Never play with your food.
• Never wave or throw utensils.
• Never grab food from other people's plates.
• Leave toys, books, and pets behind!
• Don't read while eating.

**Phone Manners**

• When the phone rings speak clearly and politely, e.g. “Hello, this is John speaking.”
• When the call is for someone else, clearly answer with, e.g. “Just a minute please.” If the person is not there, ask the caller if he wants to leave a message. Also, ask for his name and number so he can be contacted later. Write this down so you don’t forget to pass it on.
• Let the number you are calling ring six to eight times before hanging up, as the person may be busy and not able to answer straight away.
• Never hang up abruptly. Always allow the person you called to hang up first.
• Don’t be a “phone hog” as other people may want to use the phone, or someone may be trying to reach you.
• Mobile phones should either be switched off or set on “vibrate” or “silent” during meals, at the cinema, etc.

by Tina Lee

Source: 'Manners To Grow On: A How-To-Do Book For Boys and Girls', Doubleday & Co., USA (1955)