

REVISED &
UPDATED

HOW RUDE![®]

The Teen Guide to Good Manners, Proper
Behavior, and Not Grossing People Out

A hand in a white glove holding a silver tray, positioned horizontally across the middle of the cover. The hand is wearing a white glove and a white cuff, and is holding a silver tray. The background is a light blue pattern of small white circles.

Expert advice on:

texting * tweeting
cell phones * roommates
bullying * breakups * jerks
hugging * thanking
& lots more!

ALEX J. PACKER, PH.D.

free spirit
PUBLISHING[®]

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Praise for the previous edition of *How Rude!**

A “Book for the Teen Age”—New York Public Library

A “Quick Pick” selection—American Library Association

A “Read, America!” Classic selection

“This is one fast-paced, fun-to-read book that covers the basics of good behavior for teens. But before you dismiss it with a roll of your eyes and a huge yawn (now that’s rude!), just one look at the table of contents will convince you that this isn’t your grandma’s guidebook. This is a wonderfully hip and humorous, easy read!”—*College Bound Magazine*

“Covers everything from table manners to hygiene, handling friendship problems politely, thank-you notes, flaming online, and manners around the house.”—*KLIATT*

“From its intriguing title to the tongue-in-cheek ideas for dealing with many kinds of situations, readers will find this manual humorous, nonthreatening, entertaining, and educational. You will return to it again and again.”—*School Library Journal*

“*How Rude!* offers surprisingly simple ways for teens to respond to and interact with people to get the best results in today’s world. It shows that if we’d all follow a few simple, common-sense rules, the world would be a far better place.”—*Youthworker*

HOW RUDE![®]

The Teen Guide to Good Manners,
Proper Behavior, and Not
Grossing People Out

ALEX J. PACKER, PH.D.



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Dedication

*For Janet . . .
. . . who, except for call waiting, is impeccably polite.*

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Preface

I wrote the first edition of *How Rude!* in the mid-1990s. This period was known as the Stone Age. You may have studied it in school. Life was primitive then. Teenagers didn't have cell phones. Most families didn't have computers. Fewer than one in six households were connected to the Internet.

If something went viral you gave it an antibiotic.

There was no YouTube. No Facebook. No Google.

No tweeting. No trending. No texting. (I *told* you it was primitive.)

Harry Potter hadn't even gotten into Hogwarts.

Yes, it was a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. But in many ways it was a Golden Age. Government worked. (Well, kinda worked.) There was ice in the Arctic. You could take a flight without an electronic strip search.

Life was good back then. But rudeness was in the air. Go for a walk and you were likely to be run over by a skateboarder, deafened by a "boom box," or snarled at by a sales clerk. Ill-mannered adults were everywhere. And they were failing in their responsibility to pass along good manners to the next generation.

If adults weren't going to teach proper behavior, I would have to do it. So I decided to write a manners book for teens. I felt that my own flawless behavior, expertise in psychology, and demented sense of humor would make me the perfect Etiquette Guru to the Youth of America.

And thus, I began to write the book. Not a boring book about curtsies and raised pinkies that you might use to squash a bug but wouldn't be caught dead reading. No, I wanted to write a practical book that addressed the real lives of real teens and offered advice on:

- braces and bigotry
- barfing and belching
- backpack attacks
- locker room lapses
- cafeteria courtesies
- classroom coping
- dealing with bullying, rude adults, and total idiots
- picking noses
- popping zits
- giving gifts
- joining cliques

- breaking up
- breaking down
- making friends
- making enemies
- making out
- dodging dancing
- dumping dates
- artful listening
- clever conversing
- rowdy roommates
- pervy dogs
- bossy parents
- nasty blogs
- carefree carpools
- covert yawns
- super greetings
- stinky johns

So, my book came out and the rest, as they say, is history. Thousands of schools. Millions of teens and families. All basking in the bountiful benefits of best behavior. Knowing that treating people with kindness and respect is not only the *right* thing to do, but the smart thing to do: Good manners are good for *you*.

My work is done, I thought. I will leave the world a better place.

Fat chance.

Fast-forward to today. People are crankier than ever. You've got spoiled celebrities and vile politicians. Road rage and radio rants. Civility has sunk to new lows. Some days you go to school and it feels like you're a Hunger Games tribute.

Yup, the world has changed since I wrote the original *How Rude!* The biggest changes have to do with technology and communication. Today, kids come out of the womb wearing earbuds. Texting teens walk into trees. Parents yell "no electronics at the table." Ask people about their "significant other" and they'll show you their smartphone.

With all these changes I knew I had to revise the whole book, updating it for the 21st century. Here's just some of what's new in the new and improved *How Rude!*

New surveys. For the original *How Rude!* I asked teens, parents, and teachers for their ideas on manners—good and bad. I had to read each paper-and-pencil

survey manually, first question to last, counting thousands of little hash marks, to record answers and score questions. For the new *How Rude!* I created three *online* surveys for parents, teachers, and teens. This time around I had computers to analyze data and calculate statistics, revealing what teens and adults really think about one another's behavior. What's the rudest thing anyone's ever done to you? If someone's rude is it okay to be rude back? Is sexting bad manners? You'll find answers to these and many other questions in the new *How Rude!*

Facebook etiquette. Parents who want to friend you? Drama queens who Facebook their meltdowns? Friends who bombard you with updates and post your photo without permission? Classmates who spread nasty gossip and rumors? In this brand-new section you'll discover polite ways to deal with Facebook *faux pas*. You'll find 24 Facebook Do's and Don'ts suggested by genuine teens. There's also a "Code of Facebook Etiquette for Parents" that you can show to you know who.

Tips for texting. According to my latest surveys, what really bothers teens is when they spend time with friends—who spend that time texting. Or, as one teen put it, "If you're with me, be with *me*." And you know what the #1 adult complaint about teen behavior is? Teens using electronic devices at inappropriate times. With so many teens texting and messaging, it's a whole new way of relating that's ripe for rudeness. So you'll find in the new *How Rude!* the latest tips for knowing when (and when not) to text; when (and when not) to use abbreviations, emoticons, and Internet slang; how to deal with textaholic friends; and much, much more.

Twittiquette. It's amazing how much pollution 140 characters can create. With so many people tweeting their every thought and move, the Land of Twitter is awash in litter. If you're a Twitter heavy hitter, you need to know the latest rules of the road for traveling down Tweet Street. Sweet.

Cyberbullying. Think of it as bullying to the power of 10. Thanks to social media and the Internet, an act of bullying that might once have been witnessed by five people can now be witnessed by 5,000,000! And it can be done anonymously and last forever. The new *How Rude!* contains advice on how to handle cyberbullying—whether you're a target, a bystander, or a perpetrator.

Airport protocols. Back in the 1990s, if you went to the airport to take a flight you'd scream for security if some stranger started pawing all over you. Today, post 9/11, it is security pawing all over you. So here's an updated guide for airport etiquette and friendly flying.

Hugging. Hugging is the new handshake. With more and more teens catching a clinch, it's time to lay out some new rules for the etiquette of embracing.

These are just some of the bigger changes in the new *How Rude!* But there are a lot of smaller changes as well. Some topics—like video store manners and fighting over the newspaper—were so last century they had to go.

Other topics needed makeovers to reflect new terms, new technologies, and the advancement of knowledge: In with voicemail, out with answering machines. Hello iPod, good-bye Walkman. You'll find new advice for online invitations, helping sick friends, talking to computers, the best way to sneeze—and much more!

The building blocks of good manners—respect, empathy, kindness, and consideration—never change. But times do. And when times change, manners change. If you're going to keep your edge, you've got to stay on top of these changes. You need to master Politeness Two-Point-O. This book will help you do just that.

MINDING MANNERS

Nobody's Polite Anymore, Why Should I Be?



This is a book about manners. If that makes you feel like throwing up, at least say “Excuse me” before rushing to the bathroom.* You have every reason to feel queasy upon hearing the word *manners*. For it is under the guise of teaching manners that young people are subjected to a blizzard of rudely imparted criticisms. When adults do it, they call it “correcting.” When you do it, they call it “being fresh.”

“Use your fork.”

“Don't talk with your mouth full.”

“Sit up straight.”

“Look at me when I'm talking.”

“Don't interrupt.”

If the idea of learning good manners makes you feel like a dog being trotted off to obedience school, this is understandable. But if you turn your back on manners, you end up hurting yourself. This is because having good manners involves a lot more than knowing not to drink from the toilet bowl. It means knowing how to handle yourself in your life and relationships. And people who know how to handle themselves come out on top. They get what they want, feel good about themselves, and enjoy life to the fullest.

***SEE “RALPHING” FOR MORE ON THE ETIQUETTE OF UPCHUCKING.**



This book will show you how to become a master of the art—and game—of proper social behavior. It will answer real questions from teenagers across America—such as:

“Is Miss Manners dead yet?”

Good gracious, no. She lives in Passaic with two cats and a doily.

“Do you have to extend your pinkie when drinking from a teacup?”

This practice is no longer necessary. But under NO circumstances should you extend your middle finger!

You'll find out things you've always wanted to know:

- Why do adults get mad when you text?
- How do you tell people they have spinach in their teeth?
- How much should you tip the pizza guy?
- Why should you be nice to people you don't like?
- Who came up with these ridiculous rules, and why are we expected to follow them?

You'll learn how to:

- deal with idiots
- react to bigoted remarks
- respond to adults who make rude comments
- tell someone his fly is open
- be the perfect host so your parents will beg you to have more friends over

You'll know just what to do when:

- people spread nasty rumors about you
- a dog nuzzles at your crotch in public
- two of your friends aren't talking to each other
- your aunt gives you handkerchiefs for the sixth birthday in a row
- a friend pressures you to take drugs

You'll discover:

- the 14 Do's and Don'ts of Toilettiquette
- the best way to ask someone out
- surefire strategies for getting invited back wherever you want
- secrets of dressing for tactical advantage



- the most effective ways to put rude people in their place
- proper techniques for spitting, scratching, sneezing, yawning, coughing, hiccupping, nose-picking, and zit-popping

You'll be cool, calm, and collected when a friend:

- asks you if she's ugly
- goes out with your ex-boyfriend
- comes to you with a serious problem
- wins the prize you were supposed to get

You'll find out how to:

- ace a job interview
- react when a friend tells you he's gay
- impress admissions officers when applying to schools
- broach the subject of condoms in a relationship
- respond to teachers who pick on you in class

By now, you may be thinking *Holy Napkin Ring! I never knew manners could be such a source of power, pleasure, and self-confidence.* Or you may still find it heretical to embrace the etiquettical. You're thinking *Manners, shmanners. Nobody's polite anymore, why should I be?* Thank you for asking.

Why Good Manners Are Good for You

Here are 10 reasons why it's to your advantage to have good manners:

- 1. Good manners put people at ease.** People at ease are more likely to agree to your requests.
- 2. Good manners impress people.** People who are impressed by your behavior are more likely to treat you with respect.
- 3. Good manners build self-esteem.** Teenagers with self-esteem are more likely to get what they want out of life.
- 4. Good manners are attractive.** Kids with *savoir-faire** are more likely to have the friends and relationships they want.
- 5. Good manners allow people to live and work together without unnecessary friction.** This makes your everyday world more pleasant.

*A FANCY FRENCH TERM FOR "KNOW-HOW"—THE ABILITY TO SAY OR DO THE RIGHT OR GRACEFUL THING IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS.



- 6. Good manners can save your skin.** Teenagers who know what to do if they accidentally dis the wrong person are less likely to get into fights or dicey situations.
- 7. Good manners are rare.** Young people who have them sparkle like diamonds and immediately get elevated status in the eyes of adults.
- 8. Good manners make you feel good.** You can hold your head high, knowing that you're doing your part to stop humanity's slide into the cesspool of incivility.
- 9. Good manners make others feel good.** You can help create a world in which people treat one another with care, respect, and compassion.
- 10. Good manners don't cost anything.** You can have the BEST for free.

Most teens want to learn proper etiquette and behavior. In fact, 99 percent of the teenagers I asked in my survey on manners agree with the statement "It's important to have good manners." Why do they think so?

"It's a way of respecting yourself."

"People will like you better."

"The way you act is the way you get treated."

"If nobody was polite, the world would fall apart."

"I want to make good first impressions with people."

"Being polite feels better than being rude."

Some teens agreed that good manners were important, but advised moderation:

"There is a time and a place for everything."

"I don't think you should become a perfectionist."

"Over the top can be too much."

True, we wouldn't want to have *too much* of a good thing. But having the *right amount* of manners can work to your advantage. How? Here are the Top Five ways in which being polite has paid off for the teens who responded to my survey:

- 1.** Got a job.
- 2.** Got something I wanted from my parents.
- 3.** Got compliments and respect.
- 4.** Got in good with someone I liked.
- 5.** Got help from teachers.



Teenagers everywhere are discovering the bountiful blessings good manners bring:

"By letting someone go ahead of me, they got the bird doo-doo on their head instead of me."

"I was really polite so my mom saw how responsible I could be so she let me have a dog."

"I got to have a sleepover."

"I got my allowance raised."

"My family compliments me."

"Teachers respect me more."

"Good manners do a lot to ensure prompt service in restaurants."

"When I was meeting a distant aunt at a family reunion, I was very polite and she was so impressed she gave me a \$100 bill."

"I gained the respect of my friends' parents through my good manners at the dinner table."

"I have been hired for different jobs because adults are looking for kids with good manners and don't think they exist."

"Because I am always polite and respectful, I avoid some of the misfortunes of adolescents, such as getting into fights."

If this doesn't convince you of the advantages that come to those with good manners, listen to what teens said when I asked them to describe a time when NOT using good manners hurt them:

"I got suspended."

"I got a bad reputation."

"I got grounded."

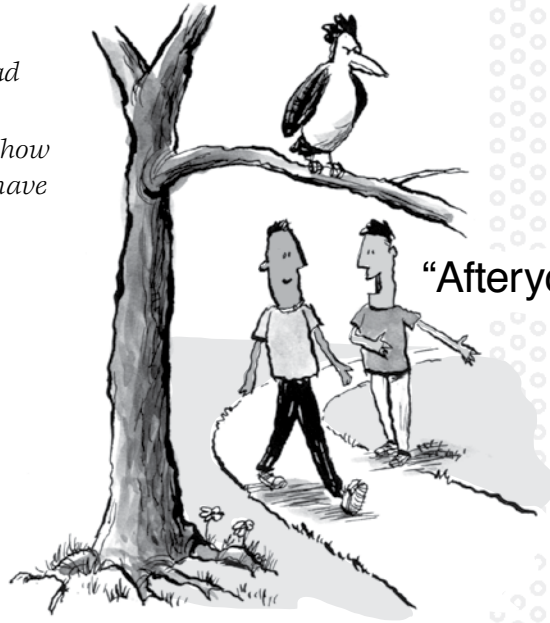
"I was rude to my foster mom, and that made her want me to leave. At the time I didn't care, but now I wish I had cared."

"I said something that hurt someone's feelings when they found out."

"I was talking with my mouth full and later my friend told his other friends behind my back."

"I lost respect from my teachers by insulting them."

"Once I wanted my parents to do something and I started yelling and then they said 'We would have let you, but not anymore because you are yelling.'"





"I got into a fight in eighth grade. I was beaten to a pulp."

"We used to spend every Christmas with my aunt. I was always a nasty, bored, annoying brat. When she died, I lost out in her \$1,000,000 will."

You can see how important it is to have good manners. This book is going to show you how to get them and use them. Now that you've begun to read it, you won't want to put it down. You'll hole up in your room for the next four days until you've read it from cover to cover. But don't feel you have to. The book is designed so you can dip in and out of it—a question here, a question there. You can use the Contents to find chapters and the Index to find topics that are of most immediate interest to you. Meanwhile, a little background will help set the stage.

What, Exactly, Are Manners?

Manners are the customs and traditions of a society that govern how people treat one another and behave in social situations. Manners are meant to smooth the rough edges of human nature. They maintain order, promote societal values, and foster positive human interactions. Imagine the chaos and hurt we would experience if everybody did whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, without any regard for the feelings or interests of others.

Etiquette—the sets of rules that give expression to manners—can vary from culture to culture. In Japan, you would remove your shoes before entering someone's house. If you did this in the United States, people would give you strange looks and hold their noses. In some Asian and Middle Eastern countries, belching and smacking your lips is a way to compliment the chef. In the United States, it's a way to get sent to your room. It's important to know the manners of the culture in which you're operating. Otherwise, an innocent, friendly gesture could cause offense or embarrassment.*

Here are some interesting things about etiquette:

- It's alive. It changes as societies change. For example, children in Western countries no longer bow or curtsy when presented to adults. Women today do things—drive, pick up the tab, wear bikinis—that would have been scandalous in days of yore. Sometimes, changing attitudes, styles, and technologies render some forms of etiquette extinct (such as how a lady should enter a horse-drawn carriage) while new ones emerge (such as how to use a cell phone).

***SEE "BODY LANGUAGE AROUND THE WORLD," PAGE 37.**



- Etiquette is context-sensitive. For example, within every culture are many subcultures—surfers, bikers, teenagers, business executives, senators, musicians, women, men, adults, children, minorities, etc. These subcultures usually have their own rules that dictate, for example, who has the right-of-way when catching a wave, where to sit at a board meeting, what to bring to a sleepover, how to treat the opposing team at a home game. The manners men and women use in same-sex groups may differ from those they use in mixed settings. Similarly, teenagers have forms of greeting, address, and speech that are perfectly appropriate amongst themselves but not with adults, or are acceptable in a locker room but not in an assembly. People with good manners are sensitive to context and know how to adapt their behavior accordingly.
- Etiquette, like steering a car, requires constant adjustment. For example, it might be considered good manners to treat a friend in a restaurant. Your dinner guest may protest. You insist. Your guest continues to protest. At a certain point, it might be more polite for you to relinquish the check and let your guest pay. (See? Good manners can be profitable.)

One thing you'll hear frequently is that the purpose of manners is to make people feel comfortable. That's very true. But sometimes—and here's where being polite can be so much fun—the purpose of manners is to make people *uncomfortable!* For example, when somebody makes a racial slur. Or allows their children to run wild in your living room. Or invades your private life. Being courteous doesn't mean letting people walk all over you. Sometimes, those who are unkind and inconsiderate need to be put in their place—politely, of course.

A Brief History of Manners

Manners go back thousands of years. For a long time, humans were hunter-gatherers. They had to forage for food to keep from starving. This took a lot of energy and kept them on the road quite a bit. Around 9000 BCE, a new age of agriculture dawned in the Near East. People learned how to plant crops and farm. This led to a more stable existence, since food could be stored. As people began to eat communally, rituals evolved for the preparation and sharing of meals. These were then passed from one generation to the next.

The first known “etiquette scroll” was written around 2500 BCE. It was called *The Instructions of Ptahhotep* (after its Egyptian author), and it contained all sorts of advice for getting along with others and moving up in



the world. For example, it was considered rude to unwrap mummies or spray-paint pyramids. This book was so widely read that many religious scholars believe its influence can be found in the Bible.

Over the centuries, manners continued to evolve. For example, prior to the 11th century, people in Europe ate with their fingers. A well-bred person used only three fingers—the thumb, the index, and the middle finger. You can imagine parents of that era saying “Ethelred, how many times do I have to tell you?! Don’t stick your whole hand into your food!”

The evolution of table manners can be quite fascinating. For example, when forks were first used for eating in Tuscany in the 11th century, they were condemned by the clergy. This was because food was seen as a gift from God. Only the human hand, another of God’s creations, was fit to touch it. (“Ethelred, use your fingers, not your fork!”)

Stone knives were first made 1,500,000 years ago by *Homo erectus* for slaughtering animals. By the Middle Ages, most men never left home without their knives, which were hung at the waist so they could be quickly drawn to kill an enemy or slice a steak. One of the biggest etiquette problems of the 17th century was that men would use the pointed ends of their knives to pick their teeth at the table. According to legend, this so disgusted the Duc de Richelieu that he had all the points filed off the table knives in his chateau, thus creating the blunt-tipped table knife we use today.

Modern etiquette books came into full flower in 13th-century Europe. They were written to instruct the upper classes on how to behave when invited to the royal court. These books contained such gems as:

When you blow your nose or cough,
turn round so that nothing falls on the table.

Refrain from falling upon the dish like a swine while eating,
snorting disgustingly, and smacking the lips.

Possibly the most influential etiquette book of all time was written in 1530 CE by Erasmus, a classical scholar who lived in Rotterdam. He believed that good manners were most easily acquired in childhood. His book, *On Civility in Children*, became a huge best seller and was required reading for kids throughout Europe for over two centuries. Here are some of the things he advised:

Turn away when spitting lest your saliva fall on someone.

Do not move back and forth in your chair. Whoever does that gives the
impression of constantly breaking or trying to break wind.



You should not offer your handkerchief to anyone unless it has been freshly washed. Nor is it seemly, after wiping your nose, to spread out your handkerchief and peer into it as if pearls and rubies might have fallen out of your head.

If you look at old etiquette books, you can see that some manners have remained constant over the centuries (“Don’t spit on anyone”), while others continue to evolve in response to changing technologies, economic forces, and societal attitudes.

Aren’t Manners Sexist?

They certainly are. Why should men have to remove their hats indoors while women get to keep theirs on? It’s not fair!

Manners reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of a society. These include attitudes toward social caste, age, sexuality, and the proper place of women, men, and children. Over the centuries, many cultures have viewed women as weaker and in greater need of protection than men. This doesn’t mean that all the men sat around a campfire toasting marshmallows one afternoon 15,000 years ago and said “How can we discriminate against women?” Sex roles developed out of necessity; it made more sense for men to go out to slaughter wild boars while women stayed home and had babies.

As history marched on, rules of chivalry developed. These rules governed the behavior of men toward women. The rules were based on principles of medieval knighthood, such as honor, bravery, protecting the weak, and not standing outside in your armor during a lightning storm. Thus, a gallant gentleman always treated the fairer (that is, “weaker”) sex with deference and respect. He would stand when a lady entered or left a room, defend her honor, hold doors, tip his hat, and offer his cloak.

Gradually, these rules of etiquette gave birth to many of the gender-based manners that ushered in the 20th century. For example, a gentleman would offer his seat to a lady, carry the luggage, pay the bill, drive the car, earn the money, and run the roost. Women were forbidden by custom and law from doing all sorts of things. In fact, women in the United States couldn’t even vote until 1920.

Happily, times have changed, and the role of women in the United States (and many other countries) has been transformed over the past decades. Women now hold office, run corporations, drive buses, preach sermons, remove organs, fly planes, and drop bombs. Girls can ask boys for dates. Enlightened people no longer believe that women are “weak” and “inferior.”



Society is often resistant to change, and even rights that have been won after years of struggle (for example, women's rights, voting rights, gay rights) can come under renewed attack by those who wish to turn back the clock. Manners are even slower to change because they are passed from older to younger generations. We are now in a period of great flux in terms of defining proper behavior for and between men and women. Attitudes and actions that were once considered polite are now considered rude or anachronistic.

By today's standards, certain rules of etiquette are sexist in that they are based on untrue and discriminatory presumptions about the nature and role of women (and men). But manners, by definition, should not, and need not, be sexist. Kindness knows no gender.

Now that you know a bit about where manners come from, let's turn to our very first questions, sent in by genuine American teenagers.

Dear Alex

"Aren't manners just for snobs and rich people?"

Not at all. Snobs, by definition, have bad manners. This is because snobs, in their attitudes and behavior, make people feel inferior and unschooled. This is the height of rudeness! If others put you down for using the wrong fork, *they're* the ones with terrible manners.

As far as rich people go, good manners are the one thing money can't buy. All you have to do is take one look around you to realize that rudeness is an equal opportunity annoyer. Thus, manners are a great equalizing force in society.

It's true that some rules of etiquette are more likely to be practiced by the affluent (for example, tipping the wine steward or setting a formal dinner table). And that the rich, because they have money, can get away with bad manners in ways that others can't. But a nose being picked at the dinner table is disgusting—whether its owner is rich or poor.

Dear Alex

"Why are manners so important? Isn't it what's inside a person that counts?"

Certainly, but nobody's going to stick around long enough to know the "real you" if being in your presence grosses them out.
