

The Etiquette Code: Requirement or Just a Guideline?

*By Ryan Underwood
Youth Development and Leadership Consultant
TRI Leadership Resources*

In Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* we learn about the "Pirates Code." Johnny Depp's famous character Captain Jack Sparrow challenges his crew to "keep to the code." Then, we learn later from Keira Knightly's character Elizabeth that the sacred code "is more like a guideline anyway."

Since before the days of pirates, there has been a professional code that those who desire success, acceptance, and good fortune have subscribed. In the 1700's the French defined this code as the word "etiquette." Etiquette originally described the rules for how to behave at court with kings and queens. Today we know etiquette in many forms from business and dining to and golf and even cell phones.

Society may seem more informal than they were in days of kings and queens and even pirates. It appears we live in a more casual and relaxed time. With all the new innovations making our lives so fast paced, do we still have time old rules of etiquette? Do we need still need manners or is being nice enough? Is the code of etiquette "required" or "just a guideline anyway"?

Rest assured, etiquette lives! While the etiquette guidelines change from setting to setting and even from country to country, the rules of manners, decorum, and what Mom would call "your best behavior" are alive and well and required now more than ever.

Think of etiquette as the outer expression of the inner leader. Your outer professionalism is an indicator of your inner excellence. Practicing good etiquette demonstrates you are willing to make small sacrifices of personal comfort and pleasure in order to make others feel warm, welcome, and included. If you care about the details of decorum you tell the world you also care about the details of projects, initiatives, and assignments—and naturally people will want you on their team, group, and on board their leader-ship!

There are many courses, books, and trainings to learn about etiquette. Learning the "etiquette code" is the first step toward practicing the code. Search Amazon.com and you'll find a virtual treasure chest full of great resources on the subject.

Not many know that George Washington lost his father when he was just 11 years old. As a young student, Washington wrote *110 Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation* as a homework assignment. It was said of America's first President, "no wonder everyone honored him who honored every body." President

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Washington's 110 rules might be overwhelming to start with, so, we've boiled down the rules of etiquette to 10 basics to get you started.

Remember the Etiquette Code

1. **Remember Your ABCs!** Always Be Caring, Comforting, and Courteous. Honor others with respect and it will flow to you, your family, your team, and those you associate.
2. **Do Not Call Attention to Yourself!** If you forget all the rules, just remember not to call attention to yourself. Follow the behavior of your host or whoever in your setting is the leader. Better not to be noticed than to be remembered for terrible etiquette (to start with, turn off your cell phone ringer!). Let your intelligence, talent, and ability to help others be how people know you!
3. **Smile & Make Eye Contact!** A smile is a sign of happiness. And people naturally want happiness in their lives. Your eyes are connected to your smile. Folks trust people who look them in the eye. What people look at indicates their interest. Looking someone in the eye is the easiest way to show your interest and sincerity.
4. **Early is On Time!** Early is on time, on time is late, and late is left behind. Leaders are always where they are supposed to be, doing what they are supposed to be doing, when they are supposed to be doing it. Respect time and you will prevent issues and promote yourself to great responsibility.
5. **Never Greet from Your Seat!** It doesn't matter who you meet in life, show them respect by rising to meet them.
6. **Gossip About the Success of Others!** In today's world of negative news it seems everyone is talking about everyone else. If you must speak of others, speak of the good they do, their success and nothing else.
7. **Be Pressed & Polished!** Styles come and go. But, wearing outfits that fit, coordinated, clean, and pressed along with shoes that are polished never goes out of fashion.
8. **Mind Your Table Manners!** Never is etiquette more on display than when you are dining. Chewing with your mouth closed, elbows off the table, and waiting until everyone is served to begin eating is just the start! Get a good dining etiquette book and feast on it!

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9. **Turn the “M” Upside Down!** Leaders talk about “we” not “me.” They turn the “M” into a “W” and use inclusive language. Watch how much you use the terms “I”, “me”, or “my” and adjust to “us”, “our” and “we”.
10. **Give Thanks!** Whether someone gives you a physical gift or the more precious prize of their time, energy, support, and help, show your appreciation through thoughtful thanks. A handwritten “thank you” that is specific about your appreciation is never a waste of time.

By following the etiquette code you develop your own personal brand. People remember you cared enough make others feel warm, welcome, and comfortable. In turn they remember you, your family, and the organizations you represent in a positive way. And simply put, people will want to be around you because you create a positive environment filled with gracious and respectful people.

Ryan Underwood is a Leadership Fellow at TRI Leadership Resources and also knows which fork to use in complex dining situations. He is the co-author of “GO MAD: Make a Difference” with an entire chapter dedicated to leading with class, etiquette, and professionalism. TRI’s “Ladies & Gentlemen” training is a favorite for young leaders and those who want to polish up on the finer elements of style, etiquette, protocol, networking, and refining your best behavior. For more tips on etiquette from the dining room to the boardroom, email ryan@teamtri.com.

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His and Her Etiquette Tips for Young People

Tips for Gentlemen	Tips for Ladies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep your right hand ready to shake hands. Allow air to pass over your right hand to avoid the icky sweaty palm handshake (keep your hand out of your pockets). ▪ Keep your business cards handy. Do not put them in your wallet where they can get worn and withered. ▪ Remember, ladies first! And, even though women are equals, go ahead and get the door and carry that heavy box for her. ▪ When you're walking, the position of honor is on the right. Make sure to walk on the left side of ladies and those of honor. ▪ Make sure your shoes and belt match. ▪ Never wear white socks with dress shoes. ▪ Polish your shoes, especially when they are new. You need to build up a polish from the beginning. The polish and your shoe will last longer. ▪ Cologne is not a substitute for a shower. ▪ Keep your finger nails short and clean. ▪ Do not curse. It's the sign of a poor vocabulary. Leaders and ladies want to associate with smart young men. ▪ When you must use the facilities, call it a "washroom" not a bathroom or restroom. People like to think of guys as clean and washing up. ▪ Expand your conversation beyond video games, sports, and technology—especially in mixed company. ▪ Listen to the conversation. Lean forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep your right hand ready to shake hands. You're a modern woman so shake hands equally with men. Keep your purse in your left hand or shoulder so you're always ready to greet. ▪ Let the gentleman open the door or pull out your chair. But, do not expect it. ▪ Keep your business cards handy. Do not hunt through your purse to find one. ▪ Purses are for carrying essentials. The smaller the better. Keep the essentials easy to transfer from purse to purse. ▪ When it comes to shoes, flip flops and sandals are not appropriate in most professional settings. Closed-toe and closed-heel are good. Closed-toe and open heel is acceptable. Open-toe and open heel means you need to keep shopping. ▪ Make sure the piercings you display are limited to your ears (no facial or tongue rings please). ▪ Don't over-accessorize. Remember the Rule of 5—never wear more than five pieces of jewelry at the same time (earrings, watch, ring, necklace, bracelet). ▪ When it comes to perfume people should see you before they can smell you. ▪ Make up is a necessity, but you're not a canvass so don't get carried away with the paint. Remember, do not primp in public! ▪ Keep your attire conservative—reveal your character not your skin (especially your back or too much below the neck). ▪ It's okay to use the washroom by yourself.

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<p>and nod your head to show you agree or understand. Rephrase in your own words what you are hearing. Keep a pen and something to write on handy. Nothing shows your interest better than writing down a great idea or information shared by someone else.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unless you are on a farm or out in the fields—stop picking! ▪ Learn how to tie and tie. Never use a clip on! ▪ When you buy a dress shirt, get metal “collar stays.” They’ll keep the point of your collar nice and straight and keep your collar from flipping up. ▪ Do not wear button down collars with ties. It’s not as sophisticated as a traditional fold down collar is. ▪ Get your dress shirt and suit laundered, pressed, and leave them in the plastic from the dry cleaner. When you travel, it will minimize the wrinkles. ▪ Always wear a white t-shirt (with no logos or message on them) under your dress shirt. It will brighten the color of your shirt and keep you from soiling the underarms. ▪ When seated, sit with your tale at the back of the chair, it will improve your posture. ▪ Slow down when you eat! It’s not a race! And, avoid ordering messy or predictable boy food. ▪ Stop leaning on things like chairs and walls. Stand up tall and proud with your head high. ▪ When standing, your feet should be shoulder width apart with one slightly in front of the other and arms at your side. 	<p>Avoid the group thing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not gossip. Going to the washroom alone is a start. Pretend you have a mic on and everyone can hear what you say. ▪ Keep your hands away from your face. Avoid looking bored or nervous. ▪ Unless you are on a farm or out in the fields—stop picking! ▪ It’s easy to complain. But, be up for the challenge of finding a positive way to share. Or better yet take a stand, smile, and remove yourself from negative conversation. ▪ Lean your neck forward slightly when you take pictures. The result will be more flattering. ▪ As a general rule, flesh colored hosiery is preferred (even if it’s uncomfortable—you’ll get used to it). And, always have an extra pair or two to avoid emergencies! Match your socks to your pants—not your shoes. ▪ When seated, sit toward the front of your chair, it will improve your posture. ▪ If you must cross your feet, cross at the ankles. ▪ Pace your conversation during dining. Avoid being the last one to finish your meal. ▪ Blot your lipstick before taking a drink from a glass. Do not leave your lip print on the glasses. ▪ When standing, your feet should be in a three point stand (think Miss America) with one foot slightly forward and the other turned slightly out. This is a confident, flattering, and slenderizing way to stand.
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<p>Do not rock the boat by shifting your weight from left to right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When standing, the most confident place to put your hands is at your side. Keep them out of your pockets and do not fold them together in front of you or behind your back.▪ Be the same gentleman in all settings. Ladies get annoyed by guys who act differently around “da boyz”.▪ Get a nice clean shave. Unless you are a celebrity and there is a nice red carpet movie premier involved—facial hair is a no.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When standing, place your hands at your side and avoid holding onto to anything or anyone. You’re a dynamic woman—stand tall and proud.▪ Do not cross your arms or hold your arms in front of you. Eyes have a tendency to go where the hands go. Others should notice your engaging smile and beautiful eyes.▪ Do not talk about your diet, your need to exercise, or your body image. It makes you look self-conscious and not the confident leader you are!▪ Your fingernails are not mini-art canvasses. A French-manicure or a clear polish is safe. Fire engine red, black, green, and decorations (e.g. pirate skulls) don’t send the right message.
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