

# An 1896 Book of Etiquette

Don't put your elbows on the table! Chew with your mouth closed! You may think that proper manners such as these have been the same for generations. But customs and manners change over time. In 1896, Mrs. Anna R. White wrote a book entitled *Youth's Educator for Home and Society*. (1) It shows what was considered to be *refined* behavior more than one hundred years ago.

In nineteenth-century America, mealtime wasn't quick and simple. (2) Family dinners were *dignified* affairs. Gentlemen were instructed to wear suit jackets. A man could wear a lightweight jacket at home. When he was out in public, however, he was expected to wear the jacket that he wore at work. Of course, when dining formally, men had to wear even fancier dress coats.

There were many rules for table manners. (3) For example, if a lady found it *irksome* to peel fruit, she could ask a gentleman to peel it for her. Then, each piece of fruit had to be carried to one's mouth on the point of a silver knife. Mrs. White also offered the opinion, still accepted today, that picking one's teeth at the table is rude.

Mrs. White was undecided about who should be served first at a dinner party. Many people, she said, followed the custom of serving the hostess first. This was meant to ensure that the hostess was not trying to poison the guests! However, Mrs. White thought it unlikely that modern dinners would include poison. (4) Therefore, she felt it was most *hospitable* to first serve the female guest sitting to the right of the hostess.

(5) A collection of *niceties* also governed encounters with people of the opposite sex. (6) Today, men and women are free to develop *cordial* relationships with whomever they choose. But in the nineteenth century, a gentleman who wanted to become better acquainted with a lady first had to leave his calling card in a basket at her house. He could visit her only if her mother sent him an invitation. (7) As a matter of *propriety*, the

mother or another chaperone had to be present when a gentleman called on a lady.



a calling card

(8) *Suave* men knew the rules for visiting ladies. If a gentleman called in the "morning" (which was actually between one and five in the afternoon), he had to be dressed in a dark coat, a vest, a tie, and gloves. In the evening, he needed to dress up even more.

Friends were greeted with a bow. In France, when a man and woman met, the man bowed first. However, in England and in the United States, the woman was given the honor of the first bow. (9) Failing to bow was considered to be *brusque* behavior that indicated rejection.

(10) At weddings, Mrs. White noted, congratulating a bride was considered evidence of a lack of *tact*. This impoliteness suggested that she was luckier than the groom.

A person from Mrs. White's world would no doubt be amazed by today's casual dinners and friendships between men and women. However, good manners still show kindness and consideration for others.

Each sentence below refers to a numbered sentence in the passage. Write the letter of the choice that gives the sentence a meaning that is closest to the original sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It shows what was considered to be \_\_\_\_\_ behavior one hundred years ago.  
 a. polite                      b. friendly                      c. rude                      d. welcoming
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Family dinners were \_\_\_\_\_ affairs.  
 a. casual, informal      b. respectable, proud      c. welcoming, fun      d. daily, large
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If a lady found it \_\_\_\_\_ to peel fruit, she could ask a gentleman to peel it for her.  
 a. annoying                      b. rude                      c. pleasant                      d. friendly

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. She felt it was most \_\_\_\_\_ to first serve the female guest sitting to the right of the hostess.  
a. respectful                      b. entertaining                      c. delicious                      d. welcoming
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A collection of \_\_\_\_\_ also governed encounters with people of the opposite sex.  
a. friendly words                      b. formal speeches                      c. poor manners                      d. small details
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Today, men and women are free to develop \_\_\_\_\_ relationships with whomever they choose.  
a. friendly                      b. boring                      c. sophisticated                      d. calm
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. As a matter of \_\_\_\_\_, the mother or another chaperone had to be present when a gentleman called on a lady.  
a. manners                      b. greetings                      c. details                      d. properness
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_ men knew the rules for visiting ladies.  
a. Silly                      b. Friendly                      c. Sophisticated                      d. Curt
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Failing to bow was considered to be \_\_\_\_\_ behavior.  
a. silly                      b. friendly                      c. curt                      d. welcoming
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. At weddings, Mrs. White noted, congratulating a bride was considered evidence of a lack of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. detail                      b. welcoming behavior                      c. poor etiquette                      d. sensitivity

Indicate whether the statements below are TRUE or FALSE according to the passage.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. In America today, it is acceptable to pick one's teeth at the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Etiquette changes over time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Family dinners in the nineteenth century were more formal than family dinners are today.

## **WRITING EXTENDED RESPONSES**

Mrs. White's book met the needs of its day. Today, people have different etiquette issues, often connected to activities such as using cell phones or e-mail. Write an expository essay describing at least three guidelines for behavior that you think people should follow. In at least three paragraphs, explain what you consider proper behavior. Use at least three lesson words in your essay and underline them.

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## **WRITE THE DERIVATIVE**

Complete the sentence by writing the correct form of the word shown in parentheses. You may not need to change the form that is given.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. You are \_\_\_\_\_ invited to my birthday party this Sunday. (*cordial*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ lady was respected by all. (*dignity*)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It really \_\_\_\_\_ me when people cut in line. (*irksome*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ young woman made both parties in the argument feel that their views were important. (*tact*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. We were offended by the \_\_\_\_\_ of his answer to our polite inquiries. (*brusque*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. After doing some experiments, the scientist \_\_\_\_\_ his theory. (*refined*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Prince Charming is a very \_\_\_\_\_ character. (*suave*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Southern \_\_\_\_\_ is legendary. (*hospitable*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Forget the \_\_\_\_\_ and just tell me what's on your mind. (*nicety*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. There was no question about the \_\_\_\_\_ of her behavior. (*propriety*)

