

GOOD MANNERS for **Today's Kids**

Bob & Emilie Barnes



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SECTION ONE

The Right Moves of Respect

Respect Is at the Heart of Manners

Manners are the sincere, considerate, and simple expressions of important values in everyday life.

PEGGY POST

It doesn't take long to spot people with good manners. They are the people others enjoy being around. As parents, you can point out the people in your family's world who have great manners so that your kids will understand what makes those persons special and why. And, of course, you'll be their primary role models!

Well-mannered persons always have an abundance of friends and make friends easily at social gatherings because they genuinely care about the people they meet. They express sincere warmth in their greetings and put others at ease. The kindness they exhibit on the outside reflects their commitment to the Golden Rule on the inside. In some fashion they share the following characteristics and values:

- *Tact*—Mannerly persons value honesty and also realize they needn't be brutally frank when talking with

others. Speaking one's mind is not always a virtue. One must learn to sometimes set aside one's personal opinions and biases. And one must always think before one acts or speaks. Remember, you never have to apologize for words you haven't spoken. Tactful persons know how easily thoughtless words or deeds can hurt others, so they guard their tongues.

- *Self-confidence*—Have you been around very confident people? They seem to inspire confidence in others because they aren't worried about their every move and comment and decision. They are very positive and often direct in their approach to life. You seldom hear them concentrate on the negative aspects of life, and therefore those around them do the same. Confidence is infectious.
- *Flexibility*—A mannerly person understands that etiquette is an expression of cultural and social values. We would expect that someone from one country might do things one way and a person from another country, a different way. One must learn to modify or change one's etiquette and manners to accommodate the traditions of other countries and cultures. This doesn't mean you stop being on your best behavior; it just means you observe the culture you are in and respect its standards before you act or speak.
- *Common sense*—One would think that common sense would be common, but that doesn't seem to be the case anymore. Persons with good manners know how to facilitate good relationships by adapting to the needs of others without sacrificing their own values. These persons know how to choose their battles while also understanding that not all battles are worth the fight.

Good manners don't limit anyone's ability to act boldly or think deeply; instead, they permit people to disagree agreeably.

- *Respect*—We live in a world that is very diverse, and we are to respect others' rights and opinions. If we disagree with a point being made, we can wait and discuss our differences in private. A well-mannered person needs to respect differing points of view. We are to treat others as we would have others treat us.

A person who reflects the above traits can function very well in all kinds of situations and settings. These traits are most important in everyday relationships and within families, where respectful and considerate behavior cements the bond of love and affection.

The last value and trait, *respect*, is what we will address in this section. There is an undercurrent of disrespect among members of the younger generation. They are losing sight of what it means to respect their elders and the wisdom their elders offer. They lean toward a "me first" attitude and therefore devalue others, including their peers and siblings. As they watch adults casually dispose of, replace, or upgrade objects, the importance of maintaining and caring for their possessions becomes a less important concept. Perhaps the most dangerous force of this undercurrent of disrespect is the lack of respect for themselves. When a child loses or never claims a sense of self-respect, he or she certainly cannot see the value of respecting anyone or anything else.

By teaching your children what respect looks and feels like, and where it comes from, you will give them tools to lead, follow, listen, serve, communicate, persevere, share their faith, and stand firm for their principles. Don't we all need to be reminded that we are valued and loved and that we are special children of God?

This truth is where respect comes from and flows out of. What a wonderful conversation you can have with your children about this vital value!

Thankfully, good manners can be learned at any age, but when the learning process begins in childhood, mannerly behavior becomes more natural. Parents, that's why it's so important to begin teaching good manners when your children are young. It's always easier to prevent bad habits from being formed than to try correcting bad behaviors that have already become habits. An early start takes advantage of a child's instinct to learn.

Manners School Family Activity: Etiquette Quiz

All the categories for manners are important, but one way to focus on your trouble areas is to take the following quiz. If you have older kids, you can have them take this quiz independently, and then you can each share your score. If you have younger kids or want to make this the kick-off activity for your manners school, do this quiz together. It's fun, and it will shed light on the missing manners in your family members' lives! Take time to discuss the quiz. There are some obvious answers and a few that might stump your child. Talk about how good manners and bad manners impact everyone, every day.

Etiquette IQ Test

These "yes" or "no" questions will help you know where your strengths are and where you need the most focused attention. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. When your family finishes taking the quiz together or separately, you can

read the answers aloud. You might be surprised by a few of the responses!

1. If you aren't sure which utensil to use at a social gathering, it is best to watch the host or hostess and follow the leader.

Yes No

2. It's okay to talk loudly on your cell phone or to someone at a different table when you are in a restaurant.

Yes No

3. Before you bring a friend or extra family member to a gathering or a dinner, you should check with the host.

Yes No

4. It's proper to blow bubbles in your drink with a straw at a restaurant.

Yes No

5. When setting the table, you place the salad fork to the left of the dinner fork.

Yes No

6. It's okay to reach for a basket of bread if you don't knock over someone's glass of water.

Yes No

7. If you need to use a toothpick to dislodge a bit of food from between your teeth, you should excuse yourself and go to the restroom.

Yes No

8. When you receive a gift, it isn't necessary to send a thank-you note.
Yes No
9. It's okay to butter all of your bread at one time—thus saving your energy.
Yes No
10. The dinner knife should be placed to the right of your plate with the sharp edge facing out.
Yes No
11. When passing food at the dining table, you pass to the left.
Yes No
12. It is okay to send a thank-you note by e-mail or text message.
Yes No
13. When sending out invitations to a social event, you need to allow adequate time for the guests to respond.
Yes No
14. When leaving the table during the meal, you should place your napkin to the right of your plate.
Yes No
15. Your cell phone should be turned off when you are at church.
Yes No

16. It's okay to go to a funeral, church, or wedding in casual attire.

Yes No

17. You need to call the host of a party if you become sick earlier in the day and know you will not attend that evening's event.

Yes No

18. It's proper for a young man to extend certain courtesies to a young lady.

Yes No

19. A gentleman should not offer to shake hands with a lady until she first offers her hand to shake.

Yes No

20. The signal to tell your waiter that you are finished with your meal is to place your knife and fork at the nine o'clock position on your plate.

Yes No

Proper answers

1. Yes; 2. No; 3. Yes; 4. No; 5. Yes; 6. No; 7. Yes; 8. No; 9. No; 10. No; 11. No; 12. No; 13. Yes; 14. No; 15. Yes; 16. No; 17. Yes; 18. Yes; 19. Yes; 20. No

Score card—count up the number of correct answers

0–5: You really need this book. URGENT!

6–10: You need a refresher course or a beginner's class.

11–15: You're on the right track, but more is to be learned.

16–18: Your parents did a good job training you.

19–20: Go to the head of the class.

Kid-2-Kid**Be a Good Sport: Respecting Others**

Do you like team sports like basketball and soccer? Or do you prefer the “extreme” stuff—skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking? Or do you like chess or computer games best of all? Sports and games can be a lot of fun, but they can also end in everyone’s getting upset if something goes wrong. That’s why you need to remember your manners when you play, whether competitively or for fun. These are things that guys and girls of all ages need to practice.

Know the Rules

Have you ever played a game with someone who made up the rules as he went along—and those rules always helped *him* to win? That’s not any fun. It’s also not fun to play with kids who have no clue how a game should be played—and don’t want to learn. When you’re on a team or in a P.E. class, listen up when your coach or teacher explains the rules. By learning them, you won’t have to think so much while you’re playing about what to do, and it will be easier to get the hang of things. If you’re just playing a game at recess or at a friend’s house, follow along and learn the rules as much as you can. If you’re not sure about something, you can always ask someone to explain it.

Winning and Losing

Sure, it’s fun to win, but the old saying is true—you’re a winner or a loser based on your attitude. When you win, thank your opponent for the good game. You can say something like, “Nice

passing,” or “Great hustle.” When you lose, do the same thing! Shake hands or give high-fives. Smile and tell your opponent that you’ll be ready next time—and you probably will be!

It is never acceptable to boo the other team or the officials who are enforcing the rules on the field of play. You always want to be courteous even if they make a wrong call.

Playing Fair

Cheaters don’t end up playing for very long. Whether it’s lying about how many points you have in a game of one-on-one or peeking at the answers during a trivia game, nobody wants to play with a cheater. It takes all the fun out of the game. So admit that you fouled Fred, and let him shoot his free throws. Tell Tommy that his tennis serve was in, even if he thinks it might have gone out. Don’t restart the computer game when Chad goes out of the room for a drink of water. Never trash talk. If you make a mistake or your team loses, don’t make excuses. Just say, “My fault,” and work extra hard the next time.

Most of the time the people you play games with are your friends. And when you’re playing on a team, your teammates and opponents are usually pretty good sports. But every now and then you’ll run into someone who’s truly a bad sport—a kid who plays dirty, hogs the ball, or says mean things to you. Many games are lost because you or a team member breaks a rule. It’s always best to play fair and abide by the rules. If the bad sport is on your team, you and a few of the other kids can try talking to him. If that doesn’t seem to help, talk to the coach. If the poor sport is on the other team, ignore him if you can. If things get bad, call a timeout and have your team captain talk to the ref. And if things get *super* bad and a fight breaks out during the game,

walk away and let the grown-ups handle it. And—this should be obvious—don't *you* be the one starting anything.

Hurt Player

You're playing basketball, the score is tied, and suddenly the other team's star player goes down with a bad knee injury. He's already scored four goals, and with him out of the game, your team has a really good shot at winning. So what do you do? Celebrate the fact that he's hurt? Taunt the other team? Neither. What you should do is show your support for him. Clap with everyone else once he gets up and makes his way off the court. If he's around after the game, stop by and tell him how well he played. Tell him you hope his knee is better soon.

Being a Fan

Manners don't just apply to the people playing the game. Fans need to have good manners too! It's okay to get really excited about an event or a favorite player, but it's never okay to yell rude things, swear, boo loudly, or throw food or other objects. You *can* get really into cheering for your team. (Just don't make the people around you deaf!) If the person behind you asks you to sit down, have a seat. There will be plenty of time to stand up and cheer the good plays. It's fun to go crazy at a sporting event, and you may as long as you remember your manners for being a fantastic fan.

When we're playing games, good manners means being good sports—not cheating, not using mean language, not bragging when we win or pouting when we lose. Everybody wins sometimes and loses sometimes. What's important is for all of us to do our best, encourage one another, and have fun—whether we're playing soccer, Monopoly, or tic-tac-toe.

Kid-2-Kid

Visiting and Welcoming Friends: Respecting the Home

I really have fun with my friends from school, church, and my neighborhood. But I never thought about being *polite* to these friends—until Aunt Jenny mentioned it. She said that manners help me get along a lot better anywhere I work and play—even with my friends.

Aunt Jenny said, “Love has manners.” Well, friendship has manners too. The very best way to show good manners with my friends is to be a friend.

A Real Friend

Being a friend means being loyal and honest. It means keeping secrets and promises, helping each other out, and thinking about each other’s feelings. It means being a good listener. And, of course, being a friend means having fun and doing things together.

But being a friend *doesn’t* mean whispering or telling secrets in front of someone else. It doesn’t mean ganging up on someone or leaving someone out or making fun of someone who is not in the group.

Saying bad things or lying about other people is always bad manners—even when I’m mad. I can really hurt other people by telling stories about them. Even telling true stories—to a parent, teacher, or someone my age—can be impolite if I use those stories just to get my own way or make someone else look bad.

Being a polite person means treating everybody with everyday

good manners, even unpopular people or people who act strange or weird. I don't have to be everyone's best friend. But I should try to treat everyone I meet with kindness and respect. That means not making fun of people and never laughing at them.

Making a Friend Welcome at My House

One of my favorite things to do with my friends is go over to each other's houses. Sometimes we go over to play for the afternoon. Sometimes we get together to do homework or to work on a project. Sometimes we have sleepovers, which are really fun.

No matter how long the visit, having a friend over to my house requires a special set of good manners. Aunt Jenny calls this kind of manners "hospitality." It means making my guests feel welcome and special and helping them have a good time at my house.

Hospitality manners start with meeting my guests at the door or even in front of the house and saying, "Hi, come on in."

I show them where they can put their coats and things, and I show them where the kitchen and bathrooms are. I introduce them to my family if they don't already know them, and I tell them about any house rules they need to know.

After that, it's always polite to offer my guests something to eat or drink. Even if I don't have any juice or raisins or my mom doesn't want me to have a snack right then, I should at least offer my friend a drink of water.

Showing hospitality to my guests also means putting them first while they're over at my house. I offer them the biggest cookie, the best chair, and (if they're staying overnight) the most comfortable bed. And I try to do what they want to do (most of the time).

I don't say:

"This is my house, so we're going to do what I want."

Instead, I say,

"You're the guest. What do you want to do?"

One special part of hospitality means sharing my things with a visitor. If she wants to play with my toy horses or my dolls, I should let her. If there is something special I don't want her playing with, I should ask my mom to help me put it away before my guest arrives.

If my guest is staying overnight or even longer, there are a few more things I can do for her. If she forgot her pajamas, I can lend her some of mine. (My mom also keeps extra toothbrushes and stuff in case visitors forget theirs.) I make sure she has a comfy pillow to sleep on, and I ask her if she needs a nightlight. I ask her what she likes for breakfast. And I do whatever I can to help her feel right at home. That's really what hospitality—and good host manners—means.

Being the Guest

If I'm visiting at someone else's house, my manners job is a little different. My job is to fit in to my friend's household and make it easy for her family to have me as a guest. It's also important to show that I appreciate her hospitality.

One thing that is very nice to do when I visit someone's house is to bring a little gift for the family. This kind of gift is called a "hostess gift." This isn't necessary if I just go over to Barbara's house for the afternoon, but it's a nice thing to do if I'm invited to dinner or to spend the night. A hostess gift doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. It can be a candle or a little plant or some cookies I baked or some flowers I picked from my garden. My

mom or Aunt Jenny always helps me choose a nice gift to bring when I go to visit.

Whether I bring a gift or not, I always owe my hosts the gift of my respect and thanks. It is nice of them to let me come over. I should tell them so, and I should also show my respect by the way I act.

Remembering to wipe my feet at the door is a part of showing respect for my hosts. So is hanging up my coat and keeping my other belongings out of the way. I show respect by keeping my feet off the furniture and my hands off ornaments and decorations. I don't turn on the TV, the radio, or the DVD player unless I'm invited to. And I help clean up any mess we make while we are playing.

It's also important to respect the privacy of my host and her family. Even though they are sharing their house with me, that doesn't give me the right to open drawers, peek in closets, or read private papers, no matter how curious I am. I certainly shouldn't use their things or try on their clothes without being invited to!

What should you do if you need something? There's nothing wrong with asking for a tissue or a drink of water, but you shouldn't demand things like snacks or treats. Instead, you should wait for your hosts to offer something. If what they offer is not your favorite, you shouldn't say so or ask for something else. You should just say thank you and enjoy the company of your friend.

If you're invited for a meal, all your best mealtime manners apply. You should try to have a nice conversation with your friend and her family. You should also offer to help with setting the table, preparing the meal, or cleaning up.

One thing you should never say as a guest is "At my house

we...” That sounds like your hosts’ house isn’t good enough, and it makes them feel bad. Besides, you’re not at your house! You’re in their house, and that means you follow their house rules—for bedtime, chores, and anything else.

If you’re staying overnight or for several days, it’s even more important to try to fit in with the way the household works. You should pick up after yourself and not leave your things lying around. It’s easy to get casual in the bathroom, but be sure to fold your towel neatly and hang it up, and put the lids back on toothpaste and shampoo containers. Take the extra step and help your friend clean up her room too. And always knock before opening a closed door.

And you should both try to keep the noise level down, even if you’re giggling in your room late at night. Sometimes it is hard to get to sleep when you’re having a sleepover...but you shouldn’t keep the other people in the house up all night.

When it’s time to leave, you shouldn’t wear out your welcome by hanging around. Most important of all, you need to say a big thank you to your friend and her family.

“Thanks for having me. I’m glad I came!”

“And I’m really glad that you’re my friend.”

The heart of visiting manners is to be a thoughtful host and a thankful guest. A good guest doesn’t complain or demand, doesn’t snoop, follows house rules, picks up after herself, and always says thank you!

And when you get home, don’t forget to write a thank-you note to your host.

*There are good ships, and there are bad ships,
but the best ships are friendships.*

Kid-2-Kid

Stuff, Privacy, and Public Places: Respecting People's Things

We've all been taught that it's people who matter, not things. But people *have* things. So to treat people right, we have to treat their things right too. And the same good manners apply no matter where we are—in our own houses, at a friend's or relative's home, on a camping trip, or even at the local swimming pool.

In Your Own House

Your room might be neat as a pin—but if you're like most kids, it probably isn't! Try to keep it as clean as you can, especially when company is coming over or your parents ask you to pick it up. And try to keep the other rooms of the house cleaner than your room. When you work on your science project in the basement or garage, be sure to clean up after yourself—or you might end up with an even bigger project on your hands! Remember to keep the outside pretty tidy too, and put away your skateboard, basketball, or other toys when you're done with them. Besides keeping things neat, this also prevents your stuff from getting lost, stolen, or broken by your little brother.

At Someone Else's Home

It's tempting to snoop around someone else's house, but people close doors and drawers for a reason. They'd leave them wide open if they wanted you to see what was inside! The same goes for private talks. It's definitely *not* good manners to exercise your spy skills here. Do your best to follow the schedule of the people

you're visiting—go to bed when they do, get up when they do, eat meals and snacks when you're supposed to. You'll definitely be invited back if you practice your word manners like *please* and *thank you*. And even if that package of Oreos on the shelf is calling out your name, wait until you're offered before you eat any.

Speaking of eating, be brave when trying new foods, especially foods from other countries. Many Americans don't know what they're missing until they try Japanese, Thai, or Greek food. And here's a really important manner to remember: Don't comment out loud on the “weird” way other people do things. Instead, thank them for having you over.

It's also nice to bring your friend's mom something called a “hostess gift.” It doesn't have to be fancy or cost a lot. It can even be a flower picked from your garden. Remember to put your manners in your pocket and take them with you!

In the Great Outdoors

Treat the outdoors with just as much respect as you would treat anything indoors. The outdoors belong to everyone! When you're out hiking or snowboarding in the mountains or camping or fishing by a lake, pick up your trash and leave plants and animals where you found them, no matter how cool that snake would look in your room or how much your mom would like that flowering bush. A good rule of thumb is to leave any place cleaner than you found it—even in the middle of the woods.

Other People's Belongings

Lots of times kids your age earn a little bit of money taking care of pets and houses or apartments when a friend or neighbor goes on a trip. You might be in charge of feeding the cats, picking up

the mail and paper, and making sure everything looks okay. The family will probably leave you a list of things to do. Make sure you read *and* follow the list—exactly! Give Fluffy her liver and gristle cat food, even if you think she’d like your family’s leftover salmon loaf much better. Leave the mail unopened, even if you really want to read that letter from the principal to B.J.’s parents. If you do a great job, chances are you’ll be asked to look after things again.

Accidents Happen

Even when we are very careful, accidents happen. It’s always best to be honest when those situations occur. Suppose you break an art object that may not seem too valuable to you, but the owner has had it in the family for fifty years—what do you do? The main thing is to be honest. Tell the owner right away what happened. Don’t try to hide the broken pieces or blame someone else. While you won’t be able to replace the broken item, you can make things a little better by writing an “I’m sorry” note. Giving a bouquet of flowers can give a big lift to the person too.

If you accidentally break something like a window or a dish and tell the truth about it right away, your parents will probably help you replace the item. It helps to remember that accidents happen to everyone and that most people are quick to forgive.

Kid-2-Kid

Soap, Showers, and Socks: Respecting Your Self

Have you combed your hair today? Do your socks match, and are they clean? Did you hang up your towel after your

shower or bath? (Did you *take* a shower or bath?) When did you last brush your teeth? Floss them? Yep, you're probably ready for a crash course in personal manners—or *hygiene*. And even if you're doing a pretty good job in this department, everyone needs a little reminder from time to time. Of course you get muddy or sweaty when you're playing soccer or wear old, torn clothes when you're mountain biking or skateboarding. But certain situations call for nicer clothing, and it's always good to be *somewhat* clean.

Even though girls don't usually do all the heavy sweaty types of activities, they need to go by the same hygiene rules as boys. Doing so will make everyone just smell better.

The Basics

If you want your friends to keep hanging around you and you don't want your parents to move your living quarters out to the garage, it's important to keep a few basics in mind. Take a bath or shower every day, if you can. Wash your face then too. Brush your teeth after each meal, and try to remember to floss, especially if you wear braces. Wash your hands—a lot! Don't dig dirty clothes out of the hamper, even if they are your favorites. You can wear something else that's clean, wait till the laundry is done, or—better yet—learn to do your own laundry.

Because girls usually have longer hair than boys, they will spend more time caring for their hair. For good hygiene, wash your hair with shampoo as needed. Each girl's hair is unique to her. One girl's hair needs more care than the next girl's. Even sisters have different care requirements. Healthy-looking hair is a sign of good hair hygiene.

The Right Stuff

Would you snowboard in a tuxedo? Go swimming in a fleece coat? Climb Mount Everest in your swim trunks? It's important to wear the right stuff for the right situation, isn't it? So remember that the next time Mom begs you to please, *please*, please put on something else to visit Aunt Donna. While it's true that visiting your aunt isn't a sport, it's also true that the visit will probably go better if everyone's okay with how everyone else looks. So dress a little nicer for things like school, church, going out to eat, and going to other people's houses. Don't make a big deal if your parents ask you to change into something different. They're probably not asking you to wear anything really ridiculous, like a three-piece suit and a top hat. You'll have plenty of chances to wear your old jeans and faded T-shirts.

The way you dress shows the respect you have for the occasion. You only get one chance to make the right impression. Always put your best foot forward. It's always better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Splish, Splash

When you're taking care of personal stuff, be sure to also practice good bathroom manners. Put the toilet seat down when you're done with it. Mop up any puddles of water on the floor or countertop. Hang up your towel to dry. Clean any dirt and toothpaste out of the sink and off of the counters. Wipe down the mirrors, and turn on the fan if the room is really steamy. And save some hot water for other family members who still need to shower. Those icy showers are the worst!

Girls, if you have to share a bathroom with your brothers or

other members of the family, remember not to take too long in the bathroom. They, too, have to use the bathroom.

How Not to Get Sick

Sneeze! Sniffle! Cough! It's cold season...and flu season...and whatever-other-bug-is-floating-around-out-there season. Did you know that good manners can help keep you from getting sick? It's true! So here's what you do. Wash your hands *a lot*. That helps stop the spread of germs that cause colds, flu, and all that other icky junk. Always wash your hands after you go to the bathroom or before you eat something. If you do get sick, it's good manners to stay home and not pass your germs on to everyone else. Blow your nose into a tissue. Never wipe it with your sleeve or with the back of your hand. Staying clean helps you stay healthy.

Guys, remember that your shirt sleeve is not a Kleenex. Carry extra tissues and/or a handkerchief in your back pocket when you have a runny nose.

Dressing Your Best

Lots of schools these days have uniforms, even public schools. And if the students at your school don't wear uniforms, chances are they do have to follow a dress code. Why do schools make kids dress a certain way? And what can you do if you really can't stand the uniform or dress code? First off, keep in mind that right now, going to school is your job. Lots and lots of grown-ups wear uniforms for their jobs—surgeons wear scrubs, professional basketball players wear shorts, jerseys, and high tops, and police officers wear a full uniform that even includes a car or motorcycle!

Your school uniform might not include a motorcycle, but it probably looks a lot like regular school clothes and is also pretty

comfortable, right? It sure makes getting dressed in the morning easy. You can wear the other things in your closet after school and on the weekends, except for tomorrow when you have a soccer game. Guess what you'll put on then? That's right—a uniform! It's good to learn at an early age to be respectful of authority.

*The greatest thing a man can do for his heavenly Father
is to be kind to some of His other children.*

HENRY DRUMMOND