
TABLE MANNERS

Good table manners form one of the cornerstones of etiquette. Fundamentally, they are the practical techniques for eating as easily and discreetly as possible; their object is for a person to be able to eat food from his or her plate without disturbing or embarrassing other people at the table. But there is much more to table manners than the way you eat: they include everything from sitting down at the beginning of a meal to leaving the table at the end.

Taking your seat

At a formal meal the guests should not sit down until their hostess and guest of honour are seated, or until they are invited to by their host. They should ensure they are in the correct seat and help neighbours into theirs. Try to sit upright with your hands either in your lap or resting lightly on the table. Don't put your elbows on the table: you might tip the table and you will make it difficult for those on either side of you to talk to each other.

If you are provided with a napkin, you should unfold it and lay it on your lap soon after sitting down. Napkins are not bibs; they are used to dab the mouth or chin for stray morsels.

Refusing things

If there are certain things you cannot eat, for whatever reason, try to warn your host when you reply to their invitation. If this is not possible, take only a small amount of the food and a large portion of accompanying foods, and then leave the 'offending' food as discreetly as possible. It is perfectly acceptable to refuse

wine or any other kind of drink. To reinforce your refusal, lay your hand briefly over your glass.

Starting a meal

Should the host encourage you to start eating as soon as you are served, wait until one or two other people are ready to start eating and start at the same time as them. If you are unsure which cutlery to use or how to go about eating a particular kind of food, either ask or observe the tactics of more experienced diners. As a general rule, cutlery is laid in the correct order for the courses, with cutlery for the first course to the outside of each place setting.

There may be a small knife to the far right hand side of the place setting, this is for buttering bread. Butter should be taken from the butter dish using the butter knife provided, not your own knife. Bread rolls should be broken open and buttered a bit at a time.

Extras on the table

If there is something, such as an accompanying sauce, that you would like but cannot reach, either ask for it directly or offer it to your neighbour, hoping that they will eventually offer it to you. It is impolite to add salt and pepper to food without tasting it first; it implies you think the food will be bland.

All condiments and pickles should be put on the side of the plate and added to individual forkfuls of food; only Parmesan cheese, freshly ground pepper or salt from a salt mill are sprinkled directly over the food. You should not ask for things that are not on the table; this looks like a criticism of your host, and it would be doubly embarrassing if they did not have what you asked for. It is, however, acceptable to ask for a glass of water.

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Coping with cutlery

The recognized way to hold cutlery is intended to make eating easy for you, and to stop you prodding your neighbour with your elbows. The most common cutlery combination is the knife and fork: the handle of the knife should nestle in the right hand with the first finger pointing along the top of the handle towards the blade; the thumb and second finger clamp the handle in place. The knife should only be used for cutting food and for pushing it onto the downturned prongs of the fork. It should not be used for shovelling food, and should never be brought to the mouth.

The fork should be held similarly: the handle nestling in the left hand, the first finger pointing along to the root of the tines, and the thumb and second finger clamping it in place. The tines should point downwards onto the plate and should prong the food so that it does not fall off on its way to the mouth. The fork should not really be used as a 'shovel' – although this is generally considered acceptable for rice and peas (see below) – and it should not be turned over in the right hand and used to cut food. Spaghetti and tagliatelle should be wound onto a fork in the bowl of a spoon. In the US, it is customary for the fork to be held in the right hand. Although this is becoming more acceptable it is really only suitable for less-formal occasions.

A soup spoon is held across the body, the end of its handle held down onto the first two fingers by the flat of the thumb. The spoon should be pushed away from the body not towards it, and brought to the mouth but not put in it. The soup should be poured from the side of the spoon into the mouth, not sucked. As you finish your soup, tip the bowl away from the body, not towards it, to spoon up the last of the soup.

If you have a spoon and fork for dessert, you should use both, manoeuvring food onto the spoon with the fork, which is held in the left hand. It is acceptable to use the fork alone, but not the

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spoon alone. Desserts served in small dishes or glasses are usually eaten with a teaspoon.

Cutlery should be lifted to the mouth, not the mouth lowered to the plate, and cutlery should never be waved about or used to emphasize a point in conversation. If you pause while you are eating, rest the cutlery on the plate, not the table; and at the end of each course put your cutlery down in a straight line up the centre of the plate.

Eating difficult foods

Certain foods are difficult to cope with, some are eaten with the fingers and others require special 'tools'. Foods such as peas and rice are very difficult to manage with a downturned fork, but at formal occasions this is the correct way of eating them, so cope as best you can. However, at a more relaxed, informal meal it is quite acceptable to turn the fork over and scoop the food up that way.

Foods eaten with the fingers that you are most likely to encounter include artichokes, asparagus and unpeeled prawns. When eating with your fingers never lick them, they should be wiped clean on a napkin and use a finger bowl if provided.

To eat an artichoke, remove each leaf individually, holding it by the fibrous tip dip the fleshy, white base in the sauce and then scrape the flesh off with your teeth. Discarded leaves should be arranged neatly on the edge of your plate, or separate dish if provided. The fluffy choke should not be eaten and the remaining heart is eaten with a knife and fork.

Whole asparagus, served as a separate dish, is eaten with the fingers. Pick each stalk up individually by the tougher, blunt end of the stem, and dip the pointed end in the accompanying sauce. The entire stalk may be eaten if the asparagus is young and tender, but if the end is tough just leave it on the side of your

plate. Asparagus served as part of another dish should be eaten with a knife and fork.

When served unpeeled prawns, first pull off the tail, then ease the fleshy body away from the legs and shell, and finally tug it away from the head. If a sauce is provided dip it in it and then eat.

Many creatures served still in their shells are eaten with special 'tools'. For example, snails should be eaten with a special pair of tongs, which hold the shell steady, and a little pick or two-tined fork for prying the flesh from the shell. Fresh oysters in their shells should be eaten with a small fork. Use the fork in your right hand and hold the shell down with your left, and work the flesh free, then either lift the flesh out with the fork or tip the shell up and empty it straight into your mouth. Mussels may be served with a special pick for plucking out the flesh, or the flesh may be removed using another shell as a pincer. If lobster is served freshly cooked in its shell, scoop the flesh out with your knife and fork, and then cut it up as you would any other food. A special pick should be provided to extract the flesh from the claws.

Earning your meal

You can be considered to have earned your meal if you are courteous and considerate at table. Look after your neighbours and make sure that they have everything they need. Contribute to the conversation but don't dominate it, and compliment the host on the food.

Eat with your mouth shut and certainly don't speak with a mouthful, however eager you may be to make a point. Many people inadvertently say 'don't eat with your mouth full', when telling children not to speak with a mouthful. This slip of the tongue is in itself a sound piece of advice: eat only small mouth-

fuls – if your mouth is really full it will be difficult to keep it shut as you chew.

If you have to spit out any pips or chewy mouthfuls, do it as discreetly as possible. Pop them onto your fork and leave them on the side of the plate. If you spill a small amount of food or drink, ignore it; if you spill enough to cause possible damage, apologize and offer to help clear up or even pay for cleaning bills. Make as little fuss as possible and get back to your meal quickly.

Try to moderate the speed at which you eat so that you are neither waiting for ages with an empty plate nor keeping everyone else waiting. This is especially true if people have been asked to start eating before everyone is served. Keep an eye on the other plates around the table, to gauge your speed. Finally, however much you have enjoyed your food, don't doggedly scrape your plate clean; this is not only greedy, it also makes a lot of noise and can even damage the cutlery or the plate.

TABLE MANNERS – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO compliment the host on the food
- ✓ DO make sure you talk to both your neighbours
- ✓ DO ask for something (such as the salt), and never stretch across the table for it
- X DON'T speak with your mouth full
- X DON'T use our cutlery to emphasize your conversation
- X DON'T lick your fingers

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when youngsters come in contact with candles and kettles of boiling water.

The children themselves should be involved in the 'administration' of the party. The host children should help with the invitations and all the arrangements; and the young guests should be involved in replying to their invitations and thanking for the party. It is never too early to learn these social skills.

CHILDREN – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO teach your children good manners early
- ✓ DO ask before taking your children with you to a friend's house
- ✓ DO take toys, clothes and food for your child with you
- X DON'T let your child interrupt adult conversations
- X DON'T scold other people's children if their parents are with them
- X DON'T let your child ruin someone's wedding with its screaming

CORRECT CLOTHES

The safest way to ensure that you are wearing the correct clothes is to check with someone else. You will generally feel more comfortable if you are slightly underdressed than overdressed, but if you are very underdressed this may appear as a snub to your hosts. Invitations to most occasions will indicate what the man should wear; outlined below are the unofficial 'rules' about what a woman should wear in each instance.

Black tie

This traditionally refers to a man's black dinner suit – a matching black jacket and trousers, often trimmed with satin – worn with a white shirt and black bow tie. Nowadays, ironically, the tie is often anything but black. Amusing bow ties are often worn with matching cummerbunds or with equally gaudy waistcoats. In summer or warm climates, white tuxedos may be worn in the place of dinner jackets. Black tie is worn to dances, smart dinners and some weddings.

The corresponding women's clothes vary according to the occasion: from a short, smart dress or suit for a dinner or a wedding, to a 'ballerina-length' (mid-calf) ball gown for a dance. The key is to be smart in accordance with the formality of the man's dinner suit.

White tie

Invitations to formal balls and royal or diplomatic functions may stipulate this increasingly rare outfit, which comprises black tail coat and trousers, a stiff-fronted shirt with a wing collar and studs, and a matching white bow tie and waistcoat.

White-tie functions give women the opportunity to push the boat out with lavish, full-length dresses or skirts. Gloves – which should be removed only for eating – and elaborate jewellery are also appropriate. If the function does not include dancing, women are expected to be more ‘covered up’. Off-the-shoulder gowns are suitable for white-tie occasions that incorporate dancing.

Morning dress

A day in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot or a formal wedding could call for morning dress: a black or grey tail coat worn with matching trousers, a waistcoat, stiff-collared shirt and top hat. A grey cravat can be substituted for a tie with morning dress.

Ladies should be dressed elegantly: anything from a chic tailored suit to a smart, floaty dress, preferably with a hat (at the Royal Enclosure the crown of the head must be covered).

Lounge suit

Lounge suits are worn by men for many different occasions: work, job interviews, parties, weddings, christenings and funerals. For more formal occasions, darker coloured suits are more appropriate, and suit jackets should not be removed. Women’s clothes for the same occasions can vary enormously, but they should reflect the fact that a suit is a smart form of dress. Some places that stipulate that men should wear suits will not accept ladies wearing trousers or culottes, however smart.

Jacket and tie

Some parties or outings may call for something more than casual but less than a suit. The safest option for a man is to wear a blazer or sports jacket with a tie. Women may wear anything so long as it takes into account the fact that the men are sufficiently formal to be wearing ties.

Special occasions

Although first nights and charity performances may stipulate black tie, most outings to the opera, ballet or theatre are no longer very formal. What people choose to wear usually depends on who they are going with and how much they paid for their tickets.

Glyndebourne is an exception: part of the pleasure of attending opera performances at Glyndebourne is to have a picnic in evening dress (but be sure you have a raincoat in the back of the car). The Royal Enclosure at Ascot requires morning dress for men and formal wear, including a hat, for women. The Stewards’ Enclosure at Henley Royal Regatta requires men to wear a jacket or blazer, which they must never remove; women are not permitted to enter the enclosure if they are wearing trousers, denim, culottes or above knee-length skirts.

Optional extras

Both men and women may wear jewellery, although it is still less acceptable for men to do so. More lavish jewellery is appropriate for evening functions but inappropriate for work and job inter-

CORRECT CLOTHES – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don’ts

- ✓ DO check with your hosts or other guests if in doubt what to wear
- ✓ DO dress to match the formality of the man’s clothes
- X DON’T overdress for anything but the most formal occasions

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views, and tactless at funerals. Hats can be worn by men and women at any time; a woman should keep a hat on when going inside, whereas a man should remove his (unless entering a synagogue). Men should raise their hats as a sign of respect when introduced to a lady. Veils can be an attractive addition to hats for women, but they are not always practical: at weddings they may interfere with eating and drinking, and at funerals they may make it difficult to wipe tears away. Furs are becoming increasingly unacceptable, and many people are uninhibited when criticizing others for wearing them.

See also **Scottish Formal Dress** in the A to Z section.

CORRECT GIFTS

Whether a gift is a sign of love or a token of gratitude try to make sure that it is appropriate: if you go to stay with someone who has just moved house, give him or her something useful or attractive for the household; if you visit a friend who has just given birth, give her something for the baby. When you are invited out for a meal, you are not expected to take a present, but many guests like to take chocolates or flowers.

Birthday presents are often difficult; try to make presents relevant to the person's interests and hobbies. Wedding presents are sometimes the easiest because so many couples have wedding lists (see **Weddings**). Unless you know the couple especially well and are sure they will like something you have chosen for them, it is safest to choose a present from their list: this will avoid embarrassing doubling up of presents, and will ensure they get the things they need for their new life. Whoever you are buying a present for, remember that it is always best to get something small and appropriate. See also, in the Special Occasions section, **Christenings** and **Christmas Cards and Presents**.

DRIVER'S ETIQUETTE

Driver's etiquette should be a combination of common sense and respect for the highway code. Its principal aim is to make sure that the roads are safe to use.

Thinking of others

In all situations, we should be considerate towards other road users. If the left side of the road is obstructed, for example, with parked cars, drivers should wait for a break in the oncoming traffic, rather than launching out into the right side of the road and forcing the other traffic to wait. When traffic is amassing in a side road, it will only add a matter of seconds to your journey time if you let the first car onto the main road in front of you. Let other road users know what manoeuvre you are planning to do: indicate or, if necessary, signal with your hands.

The single most important element of driver's etiquette is the **thank you**: a simple wave of your hand in your rear-view mirror will let fellow drivers know that you appreciate the fact that they have waited for you or let you into the traffic. The more people thank each other on the roads, the more inclined we all feel to oblige other drivers.

Avoiding confrontations

However late or frustrated you are, you should always try to avoid provoking other drivers: don't steal a parking space that someone else was obviously about to use, don't overtake a car and then slow right down, and don't cut in front of another car so that it is forced to slow down.

If another driver provokes you, try to keep your cool; if you rise to the bait you are giving exactly the desired reaction and you may lose concentration, which is dangerous.

FRIENDS AND ETIQUETTE

In order to keep our friends we have to observe a few courtesies towards them. Always remember this simple formula: treat your friends as you would have them treat you. You shouldn't invade your friends' lives and press yourself on them, nor should you abandon them because you are carried away by a new love affair or job. Be considerate towards your friends and contribute by paying for your share of rounds of drinks and splitting the cost of outings.

Sharing a flat

Living with people requires a degree of thoughtfulness and consideration, and perhaps even a certain amount of reasonable compromise. Whether you share accommodation with an old friend or with people you only met when you moved in, there will be times when you find their habits, their friends or their untidiness irritating. The best way to deal with minor irritations is to ignore them. If there is something that your flatmate does regularly that really annoys you – like spending hours in the bathroom every morning – it's best to be frank and discuss the problem openly.

It is important to respect a flatmate's privacy and property: knock before going into his or her own room, and never use his or her belongings without asking. Two people will usually have different ideas about tidiness, so try to sort out in advance who is responsible for which chores around the flat.

Some of the most awkward problems between flatmates may arise over telephone bills; the easiest way to deal with this tricky issue is to make a note of each of your calls and to ask for an itemized bill.

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the format 'may I introduce my wife, sir'. You should address them initially as 'Your Royal Highness' (or 'Your Majesty' for the Queen) and subsequently as 'sir' or 'ma'am'. Dukes and Duchesses are addressed as 'your grace', and other nobles are addressed as 'Lord' or 'sir' and 'Lady'. Ambassadors are addressed as 'ambassador' and referred to as 'his excellency'; senior clergymen may be 'your grace'(if a bishop), 'your lordship' or 'your eminence'(if a cardinal). If in doubt, it is usually safest to revert to 'sir'. See the **Forms of Address** section at the end of the book.

INTRODUCTIONS - CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ **DO** tell people something about each other to help them start a conversation
- ✓ **DO** use a person's name as soon as you have been introduced
- ✓ **DO** let someone know if you didn't catch their name
- ✗ **DON'T** introduce too many people at once
- ✗ **DON'T** expect guests to introduce themselves
- ✗ **DON'T** ignore an outstretched hand, shake it

LETTER WRITING

Although telephone conversations have to some extent superseded the letter, letters are still an important way of communicating. They allow you to lay out information clearly and in your own time, they show more respect for the correspondent than a quick telephone call, and they can remain as a physical record of communication. Letters should be written promptly, preferably within a week of the event or letter to which they refer.

Starting a letter

Before you write a letter, think what sort of paper you should use. If you are writing to a friend the choice is yours, but if the letter is at all formal or if it is a business letter you should use a good size sheet of white, cream or pale blue paper. Business letters should be typed whenever possible - typing is clearer than handwriting - or written in black or blue ink. Typed letters are acceptable in most circumstances, although intimate letters and letters of sympathy or thanks seem more sincere if they are handwritten.

All letters should carry your address and the date; business letters should also include the addressee's name and address as well as any reference numbers. The text of the letter should begin a little way down the page, usually about a third of the way down, and it should have a margin to either side, rather than filling the whole width of the page.

Addressing your correspondent

Almost all letters begin with the word 'Dear'. If you don't know

the correspondent's name and cannot discover it, put 'Dear sir or madam'. Wherever possible, find out their name – even if this means ringing to ask – and check whether a woman likes to be addressed as Miss, Mrs or Ms.

Doctors, professors and people with a rank in the services usually like to be addressed as such in a letter. For the forms of address used for the nobility, religious dignitaries and government officials, see the **Forms of Address** section at the end of the book.

Business letters

An effective business letter is short and to the point, ideally using only one sheet of paper. If two or more pages are used, number the pages clearly and, preferably, reiterate the date and reference number on each page. Avoid very formal language: you may confuse yourself and your correspondent.

Letters of application should explain briefly how you know the post is vacant: you may, for example, be replying to a newspaper advertisement or following up a tip from someone within the company. You should explain clearly and honestly why you think you would be suitable for the post, and give relevant 'highlights' from your curriculum vitae, which should be enclosed.

If you enclose material in a business letter, put the letters 'Enc.' after signing your name at the end. If you are sending copies of the letter to other people, put the letters 'cc' at the end with a list of their names. Type or print your name, preferred title and – if relevant – position under your signature (unless these appear in your letterhead), so that your correspondent does not have to guess at your name from your signature when he or she replies to your letter. If you are signing a letter on behalf of the person whose details are printed at the foot of the letter, put the letters 'pp' (abbreviation of the Latin phrase *per procuracionem*, 'on behalf of') in front of their name. Always keep

a copy of business letters and make a copy of any material sent with them.

If you are applying for jobs and using a referee's name frequently, you should let your referee know all the companies who have been given his or her name and address. Letters of reference should be relevant and truthful. If you really cannot recommend the candidate it is better to refuse to write the letter than to lie.

Thank-you letters

Telephone calls are acceptable as thanks only for the most informal occasions. Postcards are also acceptable for smaller occasions, but a gift or larger function deserves a letter. Thank-you letters should be written promptly; they need not be long but should feel sincere and enthusiastic. The letter need not deal only with the thing you are thanking for, you may want to include some news about yourself, but it is polite to reiterate your thanks at the end of the letter. If a thank-you letter for a party or meal is sent to a couple, it is usually addressed to the wife alone, as the hostess is traditionally considered to be responsible for entertaining. If you are sent money you should always send a letter of thanks as this also acts as a receipt.

Complaint, condolence and sympathy

Letters of condolence and sympathy are often the most difficult but they are worthwhile: they are a great comfort. Always tell your correspondent that they need not thank you for your letter of sympathy or condolence, because this relieves them of a burdensome duty at a time of unhappiness; on the other hand, it will not stop them from replying if they would like to. Many people who are ill or have recently been bereaved feel lonely and are not sure how to use their time, they will very much appreciate a letter and may take pleasure in replying. If you receive letters of

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envelope. For security reasons, many people in the services no longer like their rank to be used on envelopes.

Addressing letters to a woman is more difficult: a woman may be Miss, Mrs, Ms or she may have some form of title – try to check before writing. Traditionally a married or widowed woman is addressed using her husband's name, for example Mrs John Carmichael; and a divorcée uses her own name, for example Mrs Sheila Carmichael. Many women now prefer to be addressed using their own name even if they are married, and some professional women still use their maiden names for business purposes even after they are married.

OFFICE ETIQUETTE

A large percentage of most of people's waking hours are spent at work, and that time will be spent far more pleasantly if they and their colleagues observe a few simple courtesies towards each other.

Newcomers

When a new person joins a company he or she should be introduced to immediate colleagues as well as the head of department. Newcomers should be given a clear idea of everyone's specific job – and of where their own jobs fit into that structure. They should not be kept in the dark about everyday things such as where the lavatories are and how to get a cup of coffee.

If you start a new job and feel you haven't been told enough, ask your colleagues, it will help you get to know them.

Respecting the company

If you are a good employee you should respect the company you work for, and you should be a good representative for the company in your contact with other people. You should be polite and helpful with any visitors, and you should ensure that they are offered something to drink if they are kept waiting. Your telephone manner should be equally courteous and helpful (see

You should not exploit the company by systematically arriving late, leaving early, taking long lunch hours, asking for extra time off or failing to do your share of chores. Neither should you exploit the facilities by taking stationery or blocking the telephone lines with your personal calls.

Working together

In order for people to work well together each employee must know his or her own role within the company, and the relationships between all employees must be based on mutual respect. Those in senior positions should be firm but not imperious with their staff, delegating justly according to each person's abilities and work schedule. Junior employees should treat their seniors with deference, without simpering, in order to maintain the structure of the company.

Talking to each other

At all levels, people should communicate with each other: when you ask someone to do something be precise, don't expect them to know automatically what you want. If you are asked to do something and are not sure that you have understood, it is always better to ask than to spend a long time doing the job incorrectly.

You should also talk to your colleagues about more general things; your working atmosphere will be more pleasant if you are on friendly terms with them. But you should not talk so much that you detract from your own and colleagues' work, and you should avoid talking at length about your personal life.

Further intimacy

Sexual intimacy between people who work together is not recommended; indeed, in some companies it is a sackable offence. It strains working relationships and can damage careers. If you are irresistibly drawn to someone at work, you should think seriously about the consequences before succumbing to his or her charms.

The suggestion of sexual intimacy can be equally disturbing in the work place. If something you say or do seems to upset or offend a colleague, you should respect his or her wishes and stop

immediately. If you are the 'victim' of such comments or actions, confront the person who is upsetting you. Let the offending person know that you do not like what he or she is doing, and warn him or her that you will speak to someone else within the company if you have to.

OFFICE ETIQUETTE - CHECKLIST**Important dos and don'ts**

- ✓ DO respect the people you work with
- ✓ DO ask if you're not sure what is wanted of you
- ✓ DO chip in with office chores
- X DON'T make too many personal calls
- X DON'T make a habit of arriving late
- X DON'T keep things bottled up if something or someone is upsetting you

ETIQUETTE ABROAD

It is virtually impossible to generalize about etiquette in other countries because traditions and courtesies vary so much from one country to another, even from one region to another. It is, however, true to say that basic good manners speak most languages. The best way to tackle the problem of etiquette abroad is to have the correct attitude to your host nation: be tolerant, adapt quickly and always show respect.

What to wear

Some nations may appear to attach more importance than the British to punctuality and formality, and you should respect this. Always pay attention to notices about dress codes. For example, on beaches some countries do not tolerate nudity or topless sunbathing, while others cannot accept bare arms in public. Many prefer people to be well covered up when entering places of worship. It is best to arrive at any function covered up and what may appear to you to be overdressed – you can always remove layers of clothing and of formality. If you have any doubt about what is expected, it is always better to ask rather than give offence inadvertently.

Communicating

- It is polite to attempt to speak to waiters and shop assistants in their own language, rather than assuming that they speak English. If they do, they will soon put you out of your misery.
- Take a small dictionary or phrase book with you to help make yourself understood. If you go to someone's home or travel in remote regions, your company will be much more welcome if

you show a willingness to speak the host language. Any attempt at communication is usually appreciated, for example, it is polite to ask before taking a photograph of someone, instead of treating them like an inanimate tourist attraction or part of the scenery.

The pitfalls of tipping

Tipping may cause problems abroad. In some countries a service charge is automatically added to bills, so you should check bills before parting with a tip unnecessarily. If in doubt give a small tip. In some instances you will be left in no doubt that a tip is expected, for example in many other European countries cinema usherettes will hover around after showing you to your seat, waiting for you to hand them a small tip.

ETIQUETTE ABROAD - CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO find out about a country's customs
- ✓ DO make an effort to speak the language
- X DON'T be afraid to ask, it won't give offence and shows consideration
- X DON'T assume that being British is good manners enough

Check before you go

If you are going to spend any length of time in a country or are going on a business trip there, it is best to read about the country beforehand or even to contact the embassy to ask for guidance. You need to know, for example, that in France you should always say 'bonjour, madame/monsieur' and 'au revoir,

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Leaving and thanking

On the last morning of your stay, take the bed linen off and fold it neatly with the towels you have used. Always try to leave at the time you and your hosts agreed when they first invited you: having people to stay is quite an effort and, however much your hosts appear to be relishing your stay, they will be grateful to you for leaving at the agreed time, especially if they have to go to work the following day.

It goes without saying that, as you leave, you should thank your hosts for having you to stay. Very soon afterwards you should also write to thank them; a telephone call would not be adequate. You may like to send them flowers or a small gift as a token of thanks. If you took photographs during your stay, you might even order a second set of prints and send one set to your hosts.

HOUSE GUESTS – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO make it clear how long you are inviting someone
- ✓ DO say what activities, if any, there will be
- ✓ DO be a helpful and enthusiastic guest
- ✓ DO write and thank your hosts
- X DON'T bring children and pets without asking first
- X DON'T be too self-effacing, but don't treat the place like home
- X DON'T overstay your welcome

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

A job interview can be a daunting experience with a great deal at stake for the interviewee. Unfortunately, nerves are almost inevitable and they do not act in favour of the interviewee. But if he or she is well prepared the interview should go more smoothly and nerves may not be so much of a problem. It is always best to find out as much as possible about the company you are being interviewed by and about the job for which you are applying. This will help you understand the questions asked and should arm you with some intelligent questions to ask in turn. Interview etiquette revolves around honesty, a show of confidence and common courtesy.

What to wear

The type of job you are applying for will obviously have considerable bearing on what you choose to wear. You should think about whether your interview is going to be held in an executive's office or on the factory floor. Most interviews take place in an office and in these circumstances the interviewee should be smartly dressed; men should wear suits or at least a jacket and tie, and women should choose comparably smart clothes – a suit or dress.

However smart your clothes are you should not let them smother your character. Men can hint at their more eccentric or imaginative streak by their choice of tie, by having a brightly coloured handkerchief in their top pocket, or simply by the colour of their socks. Women can achieve the same effect with accessories and jewellery, although ornate or very showy jewel-

lery can be off-putting. While women should not deliberately choose dowdy clothes for interviews, they should avoid wearing overtly sexy clothes.

In short, interview clothes should say something about yourself while helping you to exude an air of confidence and professionalism. The most important thing about interview clothes is that they should be comfortable. If you buy an outfit especially for an interview, make sure you wear it in first so that it is comfortable and feels familiar.

Arriving for interviews

You should always leave time to arrive punctually at interviews, but do not arrive early. If you have time to spare, spend it collecting your thoughts before presenting yourself for the interview. If you present yourself too early you will appear a little desperate and insecure, and you will give yourself time to get nervous while you sit and wait. While you are waiting to go into your interview take a few deep breaths to calm yourself and think over the questions you would like to ask your interviewer.

When your interviewer arrives or when you are shown into his or her office, smile and make eye contact. If he or she offers a hand to shake, take it firmly but don't wag it briskly. Make sure you get the interviewer's name, and use it at intervals during the interview. If you are offered a cup of tea or coffee, don't resort to saying, 'I don't mind' or 'only if you're having one'; although accommodating, these are indecisive replies that will not impress a prospective employer. Whether or not your interviewer is drinking anything, it is a good idea to accept the offer of

drink; this is an indication that you feel comfortable, and having the drink may help you to relax.

Talking shop

The main object of an interview is for the prospective employer

to let you know about the job in question and to size you up. If the interviewer talks at length, concentrate on what he or she is saying: everything the interviewer tells you about the job should help you to plead your own case as a prospective employee. If you concentrate, you won't be caught out if he or she suddenly says 'do you agree?'

If you disagree with something the interviewer has said, say so (always remember that he or she may have deliberately said something contentious to see whether you had the nerve to stick to your opinion). Be yourself and be honest about yourself; if you have to lie or change yourself to get a job, you are unlikely to be successful or happy in it. Give honest answers to questions even if you think you are not saying what the interviewer wants to hear; it is better to say 'this may not be what you want to hear, but ...' than to lie.

When the interviewer asks you a difficult question, don't be afraid to take your time in answering. You may even give them a wry smile or admit 'that's a difficult one', but don't let yourself be rushed into answering straight away.

Never forget that you are sizing the company up just as much as they are sizing you up. You should always have questions ready to ask them. A lack of interest and curiosity in the company and the job would not be a good sign. But you should not ask questions about working hours and time off; that would indicate a negative attitude to the work.

Leaving an interview

At the end of the interview the interviewer will usually thank you for coming, and will say that the company will be getting in touch to let you know whether or not you have the job. This is your cue to leave, and you should not linger on after it. As you get to your feet, you should thank the interviewer for agreeing to

see you and make a final remark about how much you would enjoy being a part of the company.

Try to put your hand forward to shake hands before the interviewer does; this is a positive, assertive gesture. As you leave the room, don't just walk out and close the door behind you, but turn round and offer them one last smile before you leave.

INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE - CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ **DO** be smartly but soberly dressed, don't overdress
- ✓ **DO** arrive on time, but try not to be too early
- ✓ **DO** smile and make eye contact with the interviewer
- ✓ **DO** think of your own questions to ask
- X **DON'T** panic, try to control your nerves and relax
- X **DON'T** say the first thing that comes into your head
- X **DON'T** slouch or mumble when you speak

PARTIES AND ENTERTAINING

There are many different ways of entertaining guests less formally than at a dinner party. You may choose to give a drinks party, a buffet lunch or a dancing party. These occasions will require considerable forward planning, particularly if you are expecting a large number of guests. For some of the key rules about entertaining, see Dinner Parties in this section.

Planning larger parties

Whatever sort of party you decide to organize, you will need to begin planning some time in advance. Invitations should go out about three weeks in advance for drinks parties and buffet parties, and about a month in advance for dancing parties.

When you draw up your guest list, bear in mind that usually only about 70% of people asked are free to come to parties (slightly fewer in summer when people are away on holiday, or at Christmas when there are many parties). This means that you can invite over the odds on numbers in order to ensure that the party feels full. If there are not enough people for the amount of space available the party may fall a little flat.

If you are asking large numbers of people, you need not worry so much about who you invite with whom; if you have two friends who are bound to disagree, they will be perfectly able to avoid each other. Similarly, it does not matter if there are a few more men than women or vice versa.

Drinks parties

Evening or pre-lunch drinks parties are a good way of introducing your friends to each other, and of extending an invitation to

new friends and casual acquaintances. Most drinks parties last a couple of hours; if you want people to leave at a particular time – in order to go on to give some of the guests a meal, for example – you should make this clear on the invitation. Daytime parties can be from 12 noon until 2pm and evening parties from 6.30 till 8.30. You may of course want the people to stay on longer, in which case you need only state a starting time on your invitation.

Make sure that you have enough drink and nearly twice as many glasses as there are guests; when people move around they tend to put glasses down and then pick up a new one. It is best not to use your best glasses when entertaining larger numbers of people, and if you don't have enough glasses of your own many wine merchants will loan out glasses – often free of charge – if you buy your drink from them.

What drink you choose to give your guests is entirely up to you. The more people you have invited, the more simple the choice should be. You might want to offer just red or white wine, or one cocktail that you have made up in large quantities in advance. You should always offer soft drinks as an alternative. When guests are arriving, it is easiest to have trays of drinks already poured to offer them; and as the party progresses you (or your helpers, if you have any) can circulate with bottles or jugs to top up glasses.

People should always be offered something to eat with a drink. It is up to you and your culinary skills whether you give them just crisps and nuts or elaborate canapés. If you are expecting people to leave and go on to eat later, the food need not be particularly substantial. Food can either be handed round or left in strategic places around the room.

Buffet parties

Buffet parties are a practical way of feeding a large number of people in an informal atmosphere. They can be held at lunch

time, in which case guests should be invited for 12.30 or 1.00 pm, or in the evening, in which case the invitation should be for 7.30 or 8.00 pm.

Make sure that you have enough room to feed all of the people that you have invited, and that at least some of them can sit. Check also that you have enough cutlery, crockery and serving dishes for the occasion. It is unwise to use the best dinner service for a buffet party; you may even want to use paper plates and plastic cutlery.

Prepare the room or rooms in advance so that there are a number of chairs and little tables scattered around for people to use. This is particularly important if you have invited children, who will not be used to balancing plates of food, or elderly guests, who may not want to remain standing for too long.

The buffet table should, as far as possible, be laid in advance so that you are free to welcome your guests, give them a drink and introduce them to each other. If it is in the same room that guests first come into you may want to cover it with a large cloth until it is time to eat – usually about 45 minutes after the first guests arrived. Lay the table with plates at one end, food in the middle and cutlery at the far end so that guests move one way along the table. The food should be laid out so that guests arrive at the main dish or dishes first, then side dishes (such as salad or vegetables), then extras (such as garlic bread), sauces and condiments.

The choice of food depends to some extent on how many of your guests are going to be able to sit down. It is impossible to stand and cut food up with a knife and fork so, if not everyone is to be seated, the food should be easy to eat with a fork or even with just fingers. Hot dishes with rice and pasta can be eaten with a fork and cold quiches can be cut up in advance into individual portions. Most buffet parties consist of only a main course or a main course followed by dessert or cheese.

Drinks should probably be served in the same way as for drinks parties above, or you may choose to have a separate table as a bar so that guests can help themselves. It is easiest to offer a simple choice of drinks, such as red or white wine, and soft drinks.

Dancing parties

If you invite people for an evening of dancing the invitation should be for 9.00 pm onwards (some dances and balls begin at 10.00 pm) unless you are also providing a meal in which case you may want to ask people for 8.00 pm. If you are providing food, it is best to serve a buffet supper in a separate room or area, away from the dance floor. Even if food is not provided it is sometimes a good idea to have a separate room where people can relax and chat in relative quiet.

At dancing parties it is particularly important to make sure that you have invited enough guests to fill the space; if there are too few guests, they may feel shy and it may be difficult to start people dancing. If you hire a space, such as a hall, you may be able to make a more intimate atmosphere by dimming the lighting and adding a false ceiling so that the room does not feel so large.

It is usual to offer guests a choice of wine or beer, and of course soft drinks. If you would like people to bring a bottle with them, say so on the invitation, otherwise you can't rely on them to do so. Do make sure that you have more than enough for your guests to drink; few things kill a party more quickly than a dry bar. Many wine merchants will let you buy drink on a sale or return basis and they may even throw in the hire of glasses free of charge.

The best way to serve the drink is to have a large table as a bar. As each guest arrives take him or her to the 'bar' and pour them their first drink and let them know that they can help themselves

from then on, unless of course you have hired bar staff. Even if you are not serving a meal, you may like to lay on a small amount of food: just crisps and nuts, or a late-night barbecue, or – if the party is intended to go on very late – an early morning breakfast.

PARTIES & ENTERTAINING – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ **DO plan well in advance**
- ✓ **DO specify times and whether food will be provided**
- ✓ **DO make sure that you have enough drink, and always have soft drinks available**
- ✓ **DO make sure you invite enough people; too many is better than too few**
- X **DON'T cram your guests into one room, make sure they can move about easily**
- X **DON'T use your best crockery and glasses**

RESTAURANT MEALS

Eating out in restaurants is a very pleasant way of entertaining whether socially or professionally. It is of course more expensive than entertaining at home, but it involves none of the hard work. If you are organizing a restaurant meal you should always book the table in advance and, if you are inviting a large party, arrange your seating plan beforehand.

Inviting and paying

It should be clear at the time of the invitation who will be paying for a restaurant meal. If you agree to go out for a meal with friends you should share the bill. The cost should simply be divided by the number of people eating rather than each person working out how much their meal was worth. However, if one person ate fewer courses or drank no alcohol, the other members of the party should offer for them to pay less.

If you invite someone out for a meal, you should pay for it. Conversely, if you are invited out for a meal there should not be any need for you to offer to pay. Some girls like to split the cost of a meal if they are invited out by a man they do not know very well because they do not like to feel indebted to him. In any event you should never argue about paying the bill when it arrives, and a girl should never feel she owes anything to a man just because he has insisted on paying for her meal.

What to wear

What you wear to a restaurant depends only to a small extent on the establishment itself: some very smart restaurants or the dining rooms of certain clubs and hotels may stipulate that men

wear a tie or they may even require evening dress after 6 pm. In most cases, the choice is yours, and you should agree what to wear with the person or people you have invited for the meal so that no-one feels under- or overdressed. Choose your restaurant carefully if your party is, for example, casually dressed because you are going on to an outdoor pop concert or, alternatively, fantastically elegant in preparation for a formal ball.

When to arrive

A lunch time meal will usually be booked for between 12.30 and 1.00 pm, and an evening meal any time between 7.30 and 9.00 pm. If you are eating after attending some event or are going on to do something else, you should check how early or how late the restaurant takes bookings, and ensure that they have noted your booking time.

If you have invited a friend or friends to a restaurant, you should always arrive a little early so that they do not have to wait for you. Make a particular point of arriving early if your guest is a woman; it can be awkward and embarrassing for a woman to wait alone in a restaurant.

Those invited to eat out should arrive promptly so that their host is not kept waiting and does not, therefore, run the risk of losing his or her reservation or annoying the staff by altering it. If the party of diners arrive together the host or party leader should enter the restaurant first and ask for his or her table.

Ordering your meal

Most menus offer a choice of dishes, this is known as an à la carte menu; others may offer a set menu or table d'hôte at a fixed price, this is a set meal which may give you one or two choices. Before ordering your meal you should establish how many courses the other members of the party are intending to have. If there is anything on the menu that you don't understand or would like to

know more about, ask your waiter. If you are a guest, you should ask your host to ask the waiter. Very large parties may agree on a choice of menu and order it in advance.

The waiter will initially take orders for the first course and main course. When the main course has been cleared he will return to take orders for dessert and/or cheese, and coffee. Traditionally, the party leader orders the meal, having asked each of the guests what he or she would like to eat. It is more common, however, for the waiter to ask each diner in turn for his or her order. Even so, it is considered polite for guests to let their host know what they would like to eat before ordering it.

When someone asks you out for a meal, some people would say that it is rude to choose either the cheapest or the most expensive dish on the menu. It is of course unfair to select something very expensive if everyone else is having more modest dishes, but if you are invited to choose whatever you would like it is most polite to do just that. In some restaurants ladies may be given menus without prices; if this happens to you and you are afraid of ordering a terribly expensive dish, bear in mind that sirloin steak, shellfish and certain fish (such as salmon and monkfish) are likely to be highly priced.

If you would like something that is not on the menu you should ask your waiter very politely, but not make a scene if he is unable to help you. In general, cheaper restaurants and franchise restaurants will not be able to provide things that are not on the menu. More expensive establishments that make everything from fresh ingredients may find it easier to oblige.

Wine and drinks

In many restaurants diners are asked if they would like an aperitif before their meal. If you have been invited by someone else, check whether he or she will be having an aperitif before asking for one, because this may add considerably to the final bill.

The wine and drinks list may be separate to the menu and it may be presented to the host alone. The host should choose a wine and let his or her guest or guests know of this choice before ordering it. If you have been asked out for a meal don't be afraid to say if you would prefer not to drink wine.

The wine should be brought to the table in its unopened bottle unless you order a carafe. The waiter will show you the label before opening the bottle and will then pour a small amount into the host's glass. Tasting the wine should be done quickly and without fuss; this is not an opportunity for you to decide you don't like the wine you have chosen, but to see whether or not the wine is corked. There may be tiny pieces of cork floating in the wine – this is quite common and does the wine no harm at all. Corked wine, on the other hand, is rare; it smells and tastes very sour and should be rejected. Once the person tasting the wine has approved it, he or she should ask the waiter to pour the wine.

During the meal

When eating in a restaurant diners should observe the same courtesies as when invited to eat at someone else's house (see **Dinner Parties** in this section and **Table Manners** in Basic Rules). They should also remember that they are not the only clients in the restaurant. However much you are enjoying a meal with a group of friends you should not become rowdy at the expense of other clients.

You should also be especially attentive to the fact that other people may not like you to smoke while they are eating; some restaurants have no-smoking areas, others forbid smoking altogether. If you are sitting very close to the next table and would like to smoke, you should ask the people at the next table if they would mind.

Although people do not usually leave the table during a dinner party, it is generally considered acceptable to go to the toilet

during a restaurant meal. If you want to go to the toilet, wait for the end of a course, excuse yourself quietly and return as quickly as possible.

Waiters and waitresses

Waiting staff should always be treated courteously; they are professionals, not servants and their service will be better if you treat them as such. Never whistle, call or snap your fingers at waiters or waitresses across the room – however diligently they are ignoring you! You should attract their attention by catching their eye, raising your hand or saying 'excuse me' as they pass near you. If he or she still fails to come over to your table, or if there is anything else about the service that displeases you, go over and tell the person discreetly and emphatically what the problem is rather than making a scene in front of your guest or guests.

Some waiting staff can be intimidating, especially to those who are not accustomed to eating in restaurants. However unsure you feel, always remember that you are the customer and therefore have the upper hand: you are not obliged to pay for service if you feel that it has been unsatisfactory.

Complaining

Some people complain all too readily in restaurants others are so afraid to do so that even vegetarians would chomp through a steak tartare served in error! You should not be embarrassed about complaining if you have a genuine reason to do so, on the other hand few problems that arise during the course of a restaurant meal warrant a real scene. If you would like to complain about something it is best to leave your table – therefore avoiding embarrassing your guest or guests – and talk to the waiting staff or the manager.

Only in really extreme circumstances should you refuse to pay for your meal; and you should never refuse to pay for a meal after completing it. If something about the meal, the restaurant or the staff makes you feel unwilling to pay for your meal, you should stop eating immediately and make your feelings known. Most establishments will try to mollify you by offering you part of the meal or perhaps the drink on the house; if at all possible you should accept this graciously and continue with the meal.

The bill

When the bill is brought to the table the person who is to pay for it – or who has decided to do the mathematics for a party of diners – should signal to the waiter and take the bill from him. He or she should check it over briefly but not pick through it in fine detail unless the total is very wide of the anticipated mark.

If it is not clear whether service has been included in the total, the host should ask the waiting staff. Unless you were particularly displeased with the service you should add a tip of 10 or

RESTAURANT MEALS – CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO make sure that it is understood who is paying
- ✓ DO be at the restaurant before your guests
- ✓ DO complain if you are unhappy, but be discreet and polite
- X DON'T treat the staff as servants, but equally don't be intimidated
- X DON'T become too noisy or rowdy

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15% when a service charge has not been included. If you are paying by credit card the waiting staff may leave the total column open in the hope that you will add a tip to the subtotal. You may choose to tip them in this way, but most waiters and waitresses prefer cash tips.

THEATRE TRIPS AND OTHER OUTINGS

Trips to the theatre, opera, ballet, concerts and cinema are a very agreeable way of spending an evening and of entertaining friends. One golden rule to remember when attending any public performance, is that each member of the audience should make every effort not to inconvenience those around him or her, nor to distract the performers.

Planning the evening

Most evening performances begin between 7.00 and 8.00 pm, which may give people little time to change after work. It is, therefore, best to arrange to meet up only shortly before the performance is due to begin. At the weekend you may decide to make more of a party of it, and arrange to have drinks or an early meal somewhere before hand.

Some theatres provide snacks during the interval, and you and the other member or members of the party should decide whether you would like to eat before, during or after the performance. There are usually a number of restaurants near theatres and opera houses that are used to taking late-night bookings; some even offer a special after-show menu.

Who pays for the tickets?

When two or more friends agree to go to a show it is usually easiest if one person pays for the tickets and is then paid back by the others. Most theatres accept credit card bookings, which means that the party organizer need not be out of pocket until he or she is paid back.

If you are invited to a performance, this usually means that the person inviting you intends to pay for your ticket. In order to be sure, you might want to ask him or her 'would you like me to pay for my ticket'. If your host refuses you should thank him or her warmly both at the time of asking and on the evening itself. If you feel you would like to reciprocate, you could either invite your host out for a meal afterwards or to another show at a later date. If this is not within your means you should make a point of buying a programme for the show and of offering your host a drink during the interval.

What to wear

It is no longer a requirement of theatres that the audience wear evening dress, so what you wear depends on who you go with and, perhaps, how much you paid for your tickets. At the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, for example, spectators in the stalls, the circle and the boxes are usually dressed formally, whilst those peering down from the amphitheatre may well be in jeans. Audiences do, however, tend to dress more formally for ballet and opera than for the theatre and concerts. At Glyndeborne it is customary to wear evening dress.

If you want to make an outing of a trip to the cinema, there is nothing to stop you dressing up for it; on the other hand, if you regularly attend the ballet you may not feel the need to dress up for a full, classical ballet. When you organize an outing to a show with a friend or friends make sure that you let them know what you will be wearing so that they can dress accordingly.

Arriving

Unless you are held up by unforeseen circumstances don't arrive at the theatre at the very last minute and hope that you will meet up easily with the rest of your party. Theatre foyers are crowded, noisy places. It is better to arrange to meet up for a quick

drink near to the theatre, especially if you are one of a large party.

When you take your seat in the auditorium you should thank those who have to move or stand to let you pass; make sure that you have everything you need – such as programmes or ice creams – so that you do not have to disturb them again until the interval. If someone needs to squeeze past you to get to his or her seat, stand up and move any bags or belongings out of the narrow gangway.

If someone else appears to be in your seat, ask politely if you can see his or her ticket. Similarly, if someone thinks that the seat you are sitting in is his or hers, check your ticket. If the other person refuses to move or if you need any further help, refer the problem to an usher or usherette rather than causing a scene. It goes without saying that if you were in the wrong you should apologize to the other person.

The rules governing late arrivals vary with each production. If you arrive after the curtain has gone up you may have to wait for a suitable pause in the action, such as the end of a scene; but you may not be allowed into the auditorium until the interval. The only way to avoid this disappointment is to make sure that you arrive on time. If you do arrive late and are forbidden access to the auditorium until a given point in the performance, don't argue with ushers. When you are allowed to go to your seat, do so as quickly as possible with a few quiet thanks and apologies to anyone who may need to move to let you pass.

During the performance

Every member of the audience should consider it his or her duty to inconvenience and disturb the rest of the audience as little as possible. Remember that you are only one of possibly hundreds of people who are there to enjoy the performance. You should make every effort to be quiet and still: constant rustling, talking

and fidgeting can be very annoying and distracting for those around you.

It is also important not to do anything that might distract the performers. For this reason the use of flash photography is strictly forbidden in most auditoria. Not only can it annoy the rest of the audience it may break the concentration of the performers which might disrupt the scene or, in the case of ballet and other dance routines, could even be dangerous.

You should not leave your seat during a performance unless you absolutely have to, for example if you have a coughing fit or feel faint. If you need to cough once or twice it is better to let yourself cough than to try and smother the cough; the latter would only aggravate the tickle in your throat, probably making you cough more. Sneezes can usually be silenced by pinching the nose firmly as you sneeze.

If someone else in the audience is distracting you with repeated fidgeting or talking, try to catch their eye or tap them gently on the shoulder to let them know that they are inconveniencing you. Try not to say anything to him or her as this may provoke a loud retort; and certainly don't resort to saying 'sh' loudly as this will disturb the rest of the audience who may well have been oblivious to the original troublemaker.

Showing your appreciation

Applauding alone can be very embarrassing, so check before you put your hands together enthusiastically that you are doing so at the right moment. For most performances which include orchestras (such as concerts, operas, ballets and musicals) the audience will clap when the conductor enters the auditorium and, where applicable, when the soloist or first violinist arrives. If the set for a production is particularly beautiful or innovative the audience may clap as the curtains open.

In most productions the lighting will change or the curtains

will come down to mark the end of scenes or acts, and these moments call for applause as does, of course, the end of the performance. In concerts, however, you should not clap between movements. Unless you are confident that you know the right moment to clap you should wait until the applause has already started.

In the theatre spontaneous applause during a performance, for example at the entrance of a famous actor or after the delivery of a well-known passage, is not usually acceptable. It may distract the performers and irritate the rest of the audience, although it is more acceptable in musicals. It is, however, quite commonplace to applaud an especially famous aria in an opera or a particularly well executed sequence in a ballet. Such applause is often accompanied by cries of 'bravo!' for a male performer or 'brava!' for a woman.

THEATRE TRIPS - CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO plan to arrive in good time, especially if meeting people
- ✓ DO thank people if you disturb them to get to your seat
- X DON'T talk or make a noise during the performance
- X DON'T applaud at the wrong moments

If you are so moved by something that you rise to your feet while clapping, have the courage of your convictions and others will usually join you by rising to their feet. You should sit back

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

down again as the clapping subsides. Particularly well received productions or sequences may cause the audience to show their appreciation with enthusiastic slow handclapping, or to call 'encore!' in the hopes that the sequence will be repeated.

At the end of a musical performance of any kind you should not begin clapping until after the music has stopped: the orchestra is an integral part of the production. You should also remain in your seat until after the last curtain call; it is very disheartening for performers to see the audience sneaking away as they take their bows. During the final applause at first night performances there may be calls of 'author' and/or 'director'.

TRAVELLING ETIQUETTE

Many people spend a good proportion of their time travelling on public transport. Whether such travel forms part of a daily trip to work or a long-awaited annual holiday, it is made far more agreeable if people are polite and considerate towards their fellow travellers.

They should also respect the staff and regulations of the company with whom they are travelling: if there is a limitation on luggage you should respect it, or if you know that you are over the limit you should ring the company in advance to warn them and check the charges for excess baggage. You should also contact the company in advance if you have any kind of special needs: if, for example, you are disabled and will need assistance getting onto the means of transport; or if, on a service which provides meals, you have special dietary needs.

Queuing for tickets

The British are sometimes teased by other nations for their willingness to queue, but this willingness should not be mocked. However, queuing can be very frustrating especially if you are running late and if, as always seems to be the case, you feel you are in the slowest moving queue. But remember that everyone in the line is in the same situation as yourself and tolerate it with as good grace as you can manage.

Don't cramp the person immediately in front of you by edging your way closer and closer to them in the misguided belief that this will make the queue move more quickly. You will achieve

little by sighing and tutting to show your impatience either with those ahead of you in the queue, or with the unfortunate person behind the counter who is trying to work under pressure. If you do demonstrate your impatience you will either fluster them, therefore making them less efficient, or annoy them so that they feel inclined to work slowly deliberately!

Finding a seat

On most forms of transport seats are not allocated, so you will have to find one. If there are no seats available and someone has put his or her luggage on a seat, ask politely if he or she could move the luggage so that you can sit down – no-one pays for bags to sit down! The personnel may be able to tell you where there are seats if you can't find any in the particular part of the train, bus or boat in which you are looking.

When you do find a seat say 'excuse me' and 'thank-you' to anyone who has to stand or move belongings for you to get to it. If someone offers you his or her seat, you should accept it with profuse thanks unless you really feel you do not need it, or you are only going a short distance, in which case you should still thank him or her and explain tactfully that you are quite happy to stand.

When you have a reserved seat, finding it should not be a problem but you can always ask for help from conductors, guards or other personnel. Should you find that someone is sitting in your reserved seat ask politely to see his or her ticket or reservation. If the person refuses to move from your seat, don't cause a scene, just get hold of a member of staff to sort out the problem. Obviously, if you find that you have inadvertently taken a reserved seat you should apologize and move immediately when the person holding the reservation arrives.

Once you have established where you are sitting, you should stow your luggage tidily so that it is neither taking up badly

needed seats nor blocking the gangways. Luggage stowed overhead should be secure so that it is not likely to fall down and injure anyone.

Do give up your seat if there is someone who needs it more than you: the elderly, the disabled, pregnant women or women trying to cope with small children should all be given priority. If you want to offer your seat to someone stand up, move aside and then say 'would you like my seat?'. If you are already on your feet your offer looks far more genuine than if you are still comfortably ensconced. If you are sitting next to an empty seat it is also polite and thoughtful to move to a single seat in order to free the double space for two people who are travelling together.

During the journey

During the course of your journey you should make sure that you don't inconvenience other passengers. Don't talk too loudly, play loud music or listen to a very noisy personal stereo; don't spread yourself, your belongings or the newspaper you are reading at the expense of fellow travellers; don't throw litter; and don't smoke in a no smoking area.

Apologize if cramped conditions mean that you occasionally nudge your neighbours in the ribs, and always ask those around you before opening or closing windows. Help other people if they are having trouble stowing their luggage or opening or closing a window. Finally, if you are travelling with children, make sure that you have plenty of things to keep them occupied as well as snacks and drinks to keep them happy.

If someone in the carriage is disturbing you or behaving offensively, try to ask politely for him or her to stop. If this does not succeed you would be better off moving to another seat or contacting the personnel rather than provoking a scene.

Conductors, guards and other personnel

All travel company personnel should be treated with the courtesy and respect with which you would expect them to treat you. They should certainly not be blamed for delays or other problems for which they can't be held responsible. Most of the personnel who work on trains, buses and coaches are well informed and they should be able to tell you about timetables and connections. Make their jobs easier by having the fare ready for bus drivers or conductors, and tickets ready for inspection by train conductors. You should have bought a ticket before boarding a train, but if you did not have time to do so, go to the conductor immediately to buy one.

Coach tours

On a coach tour you will find yourself in close proximity with the same group of people for most of your holiday. You should, therefore, make every effort to be both tolerable and tolerant: don't do things that you know will annoy or inconvenience fellow travellers; on the other hand, try to put up with any behaviour of theirs that might irritate you. If something that someone is doing – such as smoking in the coach or talking loudly when others are trying to sleep – really annoys you, try talking to them about it tactfully rather than confronting them aggressively.

Coach tours usually work on tight schedules and every member of the group owes it to the other passengers to be punctual so that the schedule can be adhered to. Make sure that you are ready in time for the morning departure and always observe the rendezvous times given at the end of an excursion.

Air travel

As with all forms of travel, punctuality is very important when you are travelling by air. When an airline requires you to check

in, for example, two hours before the flight, they do not mean within two hours prior to the departure time, but at least two hours prior to the departure time. This gives them time to carry out all the necessary security checks before passengers and baggage can board the plane. If you check in in good time you will also be more likely to have the seat of your choice during the flight. You should respect this time period and be tolerant of all security checks: they are there to protect your life.

Once you have checked in, make sure that you actually board the plane in good time; don't ignore the 'now boarding' and 'last call' signs on the departures board. For security reasons the plane can't take off without you once your luggage has been loaded onto the plane. If you are late you will delay the take-off, making yourself very unpopular with the crew and the other passengers; this is particularly true of charter flights which may be kept waiting for several hours for the next free take-off slot in a busy airport.

Your seat number will be marked on your boarding pass, and if you have any trouble finding it you should ask a member of the cabin staff to help you. If someone is sitting in your seat or if you seem to be sitting in someone else's seat, check the seat numbers on your boarding passes and, of course, apologize profusely if you were in the wrong.

When you find your seat, stow your luggage safely either under the seat in front of you or in the overhead lockers, as instructed by the cabin staff. Apologize to anyone who has to move for you to get to your seat, and make sure that you have everything that you are likely to need during the flight so that you don't disturb them too often as you go backwards and forwards to the overhead locker to get a magazine, a book, and then your knitting! If someone needs to get past you, always stand aside as promptly as possible. If they seem to get up very often and you are trying to sleep or concentrate on something,

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

ask them whether they would mind changing places with you.

If you strike up a conversation with those next to you, check for signs that they might want to break up the conversation in order to sleep or read. If your neighbour insists on engaging you in a long conversation when you would rather be doing something else, let them know politely.

For the safety and comfort of other passengers you should observe the 'no smoking' signs and, even if you are sitting in a smoking area, you should check whether those around you mind before lighting a cigarette. Many airlines offer free drinks during the flight; however tempting it may be to make the most of this bounty, you should try to moderate your drinking for your own sake and for the sake of the other passengers. Altitude tends to exaggerate the effects of alcohol, so you may become a nuisance to fellow travellers. You are also more likely to feel ill under the effects of alcohol during a flight than under normal circumstances, especially as both alcohol and the cabin's air conditioning system are dehydrating.

TRAVELLING - CHECKLIST

Important dos and don'ts

- ✓ DO show consideration and politeness to fellow travellers
- ✓ DO give up your seat to someone who needs it more
- X DON'T take up more than your fair share of space

VISITING THE SICK

When people are ill they usually derive a great deal of pleasure from a visit. Much of their time is spent alone and possibly bored and/or in discomfort; a visit from someone and the gift of conversation with him or her should cheer them up and break up the monotony of their day. Don't shy away from visiting someone in hospital or ill at home - especially if he or she has asked you to drop in; your visit need only be brief and, however anxious you may be about it, you can be sure that it will give pleasure.

Should you visit?

If someone that you know is very ill and you would like to visit him or her, it is often best to check first whether a visit would be suitable. Ask a close friend or relation or, if he or she is in hospital, check with the hospital staff. They will be able to tell you whether or not the patient is receiving visitors. They may also warn you if, for example, you should not expect much in the way of response from the patient. Even those who are unconscious or unable to communicate may draw great strength from your visit, and the stimulation may even help their recovery.

Timing your visit

Before visiting someone who is sick you should check the hospital's visiting hours or, if the patient is at home, check with his or her family when it would be convenient for you to drop in. Hospitals may also restrict the number of people who can be with the patient at any one time, so be patient and wait your time within the allotted visiting hours. It goes without saying that close