

Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour

George Washington
Thomas J. Jackson
Robert E. Lee

General Deportment

Maintain control of your body.

2d When in Company, put not your Hands to any Part of the Body, not usually Discovered.

4th In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.

10th When you Sit down, Keep your Feet firm and Even, without putting one on the other or Crossing them.

11th Shift not yourself in the Sight of others nor Gnaw your nails.

16th Do not Puff up the Cheeks, Loll not out the tongue rub the Hands, or beard, thrust out the lips, or bite them or keep the Lips too open or too Close.

Make sure that your motions, expressions, vocal qualities and dress are appropriate to the situation.

7th Put not off your Cloths in the presence of Others, nor go out your Chamber half Dressed.

12th Shake not the head, Feet, or Legs roll not the Eyes lift not one eyebrow higher than the other wry not the mouth, and bedew no man's face with your Spittle, by approaching too near him when you Speak.

20th The Gestures of the Body must be Suited to the discourse you are upon.

52d In your Apparel be Modest and endeavor to accommodate Nature, rather than to procure Admiration keep to the Fashion of your equals Such as are Civil and orderly with respect to Times and Places.

54th Play not the Peacock, looking everywhere about you, to See if you be well Decked, if your Shoes fit well if your Stockings sit neatly, and Cloths handsomely.

- Forced complaisance is fopping & affected easiness is ridiculous. TJJ
- Good breeding is opposed to selfishness, vanity or pride. TJJ

Let your presence project comfort, ease, peace and attention to what is going on about you.

19th let your Countenance be pleasant but in Serious Matters Somewhat grave.

53d Run not in the Streets, neither go too slowly nor with Mouth open go not Shaking your Arms kick not the earth with your feet, go not upon the Toes, nor in a Dancing fashion.

55th Eat not in the Streets, nor in the House, out of Season.

- Tranquility – Be not disturbed at trifles nor at accidents common or unavoidable. TJJ

Show consideration to others by not presuming to knowledge that is not yours nor to displays that are designed to show off your abilities.

38th In visiting the Sick, do not Presently play the Physician if you be not Knowing therein.

41st Undertake not to Teach your equal in the art himself Professes; it Savors of arrogance.

63d A Man ought not to value himself of his Achievements, or rare Qualities of wit; much less of his riches Virtue or Kindred.

68th Go not thither, where you know not, whether you Shall be Welcome or not. Give not Advice without being Asked & when desired do it briefly.

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72d Speak not in an unknown Tongue in Company but in your own Language and that as those of Quality do and not as the Vulgar; Sublime matters treat Seriously.

83d when you deliver a matter do it without passion & with discretion, however mean the person be you do it too.

Table Manners

Show restraint and control of your actions while eating.

91st Make no Show of taking great Delight in your Victuals, Feed not with Greediness; cut your Bread with a Knife, lean not on the Table neither find fault with what you Eat.

94th If you Soak bread in the Sauce let it be no more than what you put in your Mouth at a time and blow not your broth at Table but Stay till Cools of it Self.

95th Put not your meat to your Mouth with your Knife in your hand neither Spit forth the Stones of any fruit Pie upon a Dish nor Cast anything under the table.

97th Put not another bit into your Mouth until the former be Swallowed let not your Morsels be too big for the Jowls.

98th Drink not nor talk with your mouth full neither Gaze about you while you are a Drinking.

99th Drink not too leisurely nor yet too hastily. Before and after Drinking wipe your Lips breath not then or Ever with too Great a Noise, for its uncivil.

105th Be not Angry at Table whatever happens & if you have reason to be so, Show it not but on a Cheerful Countenance especially if there be Strangers for Good Humor makes one Dish of Meat a Feast.

107th If others talk at Table be attentive but talk not with Meat in your Mouth.

- Be temperate – eat too little rather than too much. TJJ
- Temperance – Eat not to dullness, drink not to elevation. TJJ

Keep your person and utensils as clean and neat as possible during the meal.

92d Take no Salt or cut Bread with your Knife Greasy.

96th It's unbecoming to Stoop much to ones Meat Keep your Fingers clean & when foul wipe them on a Corner of your Table Napkin.

Be discrete in your actions at the table.

100th Cleanse not your teeth with the Table Cloth Napkin Fork or Knife but if Others do it let it be done wt. a Pick Tooth.

101st Rinse not your Mouth in the Presence of Others.

Show deference to those older or more noble than yourself.

104th It belongs to the Chiefest in Company to unfold his Napkin and fall to Meat first, But he ought then to Begin in time & to Dispatch with Dexterity that the Slowest may have time allowed him.

106th Set not yourself at the upper of the Table but if it Be your Due or that the Master of the house will have it So, Contend not, least you Should Trouble the Company.

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Personal Hygiene

Keep your mouth covered when you sneeze or yawn.

5th If You Cough, Sneeze, Sigh, or Yawn, do it not Loud but Privately; and Speak not in your Yawning, but put Your handkerchief or Hand before your face and turn aside.

90th Being Set at meat Scratch not neither Spit Cough or blow your Nose except there's a Necessity for it.

Always present a clean and well kept appearance to the world, in both body and dress.

15th Keep your Nails clean and Short, also your Hands and Teeth Clean yet without Showing any great Concern for them.

51st Wear not your Cloths, foul, ripped or Dusty but See they be Brushed once every day at least and take heed that you approach not to any Uncleaness.

- Cleanliness – Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes or habitation. TJJ

Respect

When around others, your first, last and every thought in between should be to show all appropriate attention to them.

1st Every Action done in Company, ought to be with Some Sign of Respect, to those that are Present.

6th Sleep not when others Speak, Sit not when others stand, Speak not when you Should hold your Peace, walk not on when others Stop.

14th Turn not your Back to others especially in Speaking, Jog not the Table or Desk on which Another reads or writes, lean not upon any one.

18th Read no Letters, Books, or Papers in Company but when there is a Necessity for the doing of it you must ask leave: come not near the Books or Writings of Another so as to read them unless desired or give your opinion of them unasked also look not nigh when another is writing a Letter.

28th If any one come to Speak to you while you are Sitting Stand up though he be your Inferior, and when you Present Seats let it be to everyone according to his Degree.

39th In writing or Speaking, give to every Person his due Title According to his Degree & the Custom of the Place.

66th Be not forward but friendly and Courteous; the first to Salute hear and answer & be not Pensive when it's a time to Converse.

74th When Another Speaks be attentive your Self and disturb not the Audience if any hesitate in his Words help him not nor Prompt him without desired, Interrupt him not, nor Answer him till his Speech be ended.

75th In the midst of Discourse ask not of what one treateth but if you Perceive any Stop because of your coming you may well entreat him gently to Proceed: If a Person of Quality comes in while your Conversing it's handsome to Repeat what was said before.

76th While you are talking, Point not with your Finger at him of Whom you Discourse nor Approach too near him to whom you talk especially to his face.

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78th Make no Comparisons and if any of the Company be Commended for any brave act of Virtue, commend not another for the Same.

87th Let thy carriage be such as becomes a Man Grave Settled and attentive to that which is spoken. Contradict not at every turn what others Say.

- Be sociable – speak to all who speak to you and those whose acquaintance you do not wish to avoid, hesitate not to notice them first. TJJ
- Endeavor to be a peace with all men. TJJ
- Good-breeding or true politeness is the art of showing men by external signs the internal regard we have for them. TJJ
- Be kind, condescending & affable. TJJ
- Endeavor to please without hardly allowing it to be perceived. TJJ
- Always look people in the face when addressing them & generally when they address you. TJJ
- Attend to a person who is addressing you. TJJ
- Do not interrupt the person who is speaking by saying yes or no & such like at every sentence. An occasional assent either by word or action may be well enough. TJJ

Show active humility by deferring to the benefit of others.

8th At Play and at Fire its Good manners to Give Place to the last Comer, and affect not to Speak Louder than Ordinary.

32d: To one that is your equal, or not much inferior you are to give the chief Place in your Lodging and he to who 'tis offered ought at the first to refuse it but at the Second to accept though not without acknowledging his own unworthiness.

- Spare no effort to suppress selfishness unless that effort would entail sorrow. TJJ

Fame which does not result from good actions and achievements for the good of the whole people is not to be desired. RLE

I know that I fall far short of my obligations. RLE

I know of nothing good I could tell you of myself. RLE

I tremble for our country when I hear of confidence expressed in me. I know too well my weaknesses, and that our only hope is in God. RLE

Don't be a phony: be genuine and honest in your dealings with others.

17th Be no Flatterer, neither Play with any that delights not to be Played Withal.

25th Superfluous Complements and all Affectation of Ceremonies are to be avoided, yet where due they are not to be Neglected.

82d undertake not what you cannot perform but be careful to keep your promise.

- Sacrifice your life rather than your word. TJJ
- Sincerity – Use no hurtful deceit: think innocently and justly, and if you speak, speak accordingly. TJJ
- Anyone who has anything to say to a fellow [human] being to say it with kind feelings & a sincere desire to please & this whenever it is done will atone for much awkwardness in the manner of expression. TJJ

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Show special regard and respect to those deserving it: elders, masters, parents, men of renown.

26th In Pulling off your Hat to Persons of Distinction, as Noblemen, Justices, Churchmen &c make a Reverence, bowing more or less according to the Custom of the Better Bred, and Quality of the Person. Amongst your equals expect not always that they Should begin with you first, but to Pull off the Hat when there is no need is Affectation, in the Manner of Saluting and resaluting in words keep to the most usual Custom.

27th Tis ill manners to bid one more eminent than yourself be covered as well as not to do it to whom it's due Likewise he that makes too much haste to Put on his hat does not well, yet he ought to Put it on at the first, or at most the Second time of being asked; now what is herein Spoken, of Qualification in behavior in Saluting, ought also to be observed in taking of Place, and Sitting down for ceremonies without Bounds is troublesome.

29th When you meet with one of Greater Quality than yourself, Stop, and retire especially if it be at a Door or any Straight place to give way for him to Pass.

30th In walking the highest Place in most Country's Seems to be on the right hand therefore Place yourself on the left of him whom you desire to Honor: but if three walk together the middle Place is the most Honorable the wall is usually given to the most worthy if two walk together.

31st If any one far Surpasses others, either in age, Estate, or Merit yet would give Place to a meaner than himself in his own lodging or elsewhere the one ought not to except it, So he on the other part should not use much earnestness nor offer it above once or twice.

33d They that are in Dignity or in office have in all places Precedence but whilst they are Young they ought to respect those that are their equals in Birth or other Qualities, though they have no Public charge.

34th It is good Manners to prefer them to whom we Speak before ourselves especially if they be above us with whom in no Sort we ought to begin.

36th Artificers & Persons of low Degree ought not to use many ceremonies to Lords, or Others of high Degree but Respect and highly Honor them, and those of high Degree ought to treat them with affability & Courtesy, without Arrogance.

37th In Speaking to men of Quality do not lean nor Look them full in the Face, nor approach too near them at least Keep a full Pace from them.

40th Strive not with your Superiors in argument, but always Submit your Judgment to others with Modesty.

57th In walking up and Down in a House, only with One in Company if he be Greater than yourself, at the first give him the Right hand and Stop not till he does and be not the first that turns, and when you do turn let it be with your face towards him, if he be a Man of Great Quality, walk not with him Cheek by Jowl but Somewhat behind him; but yet in Such a Manner that he may easily Speak to you.

84th When your Superiors talk to any Body hearken not neither Speak nor Laugh.

85th In Company of these of Higher Quality than yourself Speak not till you are asked a Question then Stand upright put off your Hat & Answer in few words.

Be brief and to the point when you are speaking in a group.

35th Let your Discourse with Men of Business be Short and Comprehensive.

73d Think before you Speak pronounce not imperfectly nor bring out your Words too hastily but orderly & distinctly.

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77th Treat with men at fit Times about Business & Whisper not in the Company of Others.

80th Be not Tedious in Discourse or in reading unless you find the Company pleased therewith.

88th Be not tedious in Discourse, make not many Digressions, nor repeat often the Same manner of Discourse.

- When in company, do not endeavor to monopolize all the conversation unless such monopolization appears necessary, but be content with listening and gaining information, yet converse rather than suffer conversation to draw to a close unnecessarily. TJJ
- Silence – speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation. TJJ
- Never weary your company by talking too long or too frequently. TJJ

Discretion

Be careful in dealing with others to do nothing overtly that could cause offense, but strive to show mercy and compassion in all your dealings

3d Show Nothing to your Friend that may affright him.

21st: Reproach none for the Infirmities of Nature, nor Delight to Put them that have in mind thereof.

22d Show not yourself glad at the Misfortune of another though he were your enemy.

23d When you see a Crime punished, you may be inwardly Pleased; but always show Pity to the Suffering Offender.

43d Do not express Joy before one sick or in pain for that contrary Passion will aggravate his Misery.

44th When a man does all he can though it Succeeds not well blame not him that did it.

48th Wherein you reprove Another be unblameable yourself; for example is more prevalent than Precepts.

49th Use no Reproachful Language against any one neither Curse nor Revile.

62d Speak not of doleful Things in a Time of Mirth or at the Table; Speak not of Melancholy Things as Death and Wounds, and if others Mention them Change if you can the Discourse tell not your Dreams, but to your intimate Friend.

64th Break not a Jest where none take pleasure in mirth Laugh not aloud, nor at all without Occasion, deride no mans Misfortune, though' there Seem to be Some cause.

65th Speak not injurious Words neither in Jest nor Earnest Scoff at none although they give Occasion.

67th Detract not from others neither be excessive in Commanding.

69th If two contend together take not the part of either unconstrained; and be not obstinate in your own Opinion, in Things indifferent be of the Major Side.

70th Reprehend not the imperfections of others for that belongs to Parents Masters and Superiors.

71st Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others.

86th In Disputes, be not So Desirous to Overcome as not to give Liberty to each one to deliver his Opinion and Submit to the Judgment of the Major Part especially if they are Judges of the Dispute.

- Never speak disrespectfully of any one without a cause. TJJ

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The gentleman does not needlessly and unnecessarily remind an offender of a wrong he may have committed against him. He cannot only forgive, he can forget; and he strives for that nobleness of self and mildness of character which impart sufficient strength to let the past be but the past. A true man of honor feels humbled himself when he cannot help humbling others. RLE

If you have any fault to find with any one, tell him, not others, of what you complain; there is no more dangerous experiment than that of undertaking to be one thing before a man's face and another behind his back. RLE

Education

The first business of education is to draw forth and put into habitual exercise the former dispositions, such as kindness, justice and self-denial. RLE

The more you know, the more you find there is to know in this grand and beautiful world. It is only the ignorant who suppose themselves omniscient. RLE

Everyone should do all in his power to collect and disseminate the truth, in the hope that it may find a place in history, and descend to posterity. RLE

No one ever becomes too old to study the precious truths of the Bible. RLE

I prefer the Bible to any other book. There is enough in that to satisfy the most ardent thirst for knowledge; to open the way to true wisdom; and to teach the only road to salvation and eternal happiness. It is not above human comprehension, and it is sufficient to satisfy all its desires. RLE

Avoid all frivolous authors, such as novel writers, and all skeptical authors, whether religious, philosophical or moral. RLE

Never touch a novel. They print beauty more charming than nature, and describe happiness that never exists. RLE

Character

Let charity rule what you hear and accept about others: believe only what is clearly proven by many good witnesses

50th Be not hasty to believe flying Reports to the Disparagement of any.

79th Be not apt to relate News if you know not the truth thereof. In Discoursing of things you Have heard Name not your Author always A Secret Discover not.

89th Speak not Evil of the absent for it is unjust.

Behave in a measured and controlled manner with others, showing sobriety, dignity and grace

24th Do not laugh too loud or too much at any Public Spectacle.

42d Let thy ceremonies in Courtesy be proper to the Dignity of his place with whom thou converses for it is absurd to act the same with a Clown and a Prince.

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45th Being to advise or reprehend any one, consider whether it ought to be in public or in Private; presently, or at Some other time in what terms to do it & in reproving Show no Sign of Choler but do it with all Sweetness and Mildness.

46th Take all Admonitions thankfully in what Time or Place So ever given but afterwards not being culpable take a Time & Place convenient to let him know it that gave them.

47th Mock not nor Jest at anything of Importance break no Jest that are Sharp Biting and if you Deliver anything witty and Pleasant abstain from Laughing there at yourself.

58th Let your Conversation be without Malice or Envy, for 'tis a Sign of a Tractable and Commendable Nature: And in all Causes of Passion admit Reason to Govern.

59th Never express anything unbecoming, nor Act against the Rules Moral before your inferiors.

61st Utter not base and frivolous things amongst grave and Learned Men nor very Difficult Questions or Subjects, among the Ignorant or things hard to be believed, Stuff not your Discourse with Sentences amongst your Betters nor Equals.

- Order – Let all your things have their place: let each part of your business have its time. TJJ
- Moderation – Avoid extremes: forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve. TJJ
- Frugality – Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e., waste nothing. TJJ

In your choices, chose to associate with the good and noble

56th Associate yourself with Men of good Quality if you Esteem your own Reputation; for 'tis better to be alone than in bad Company.

- After you have formed an acquaintance with an individual, never allow it to draw to a close without a cause. TJJ

Don't expect to know all things about others. Let your friends disclose their secrets to you of their own choosing

60th Be not immodest in urging your Friends to Discover a Secret.

81st Be not Curious to Know the Affairs of Others neither approach those that Speak in Private.

Always display godly character.

108th When you Speak of God or his Attributes, let it be Seriously & wt. Reverence. Honor & Obey your Natural Parents although they be Poor.

109th Let your Recreations be Manful not Sinful.

110th Labor to keep alive in your Breast that Little Spark of Celestial fire Called Conscience.

- Endeavor to do well everything which you undertake through preference. TJJ
- Resolution – Resolve to perform what you ought: perform without fail what you resolve. TJJ
- Industry – Lose not time, be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions. TJJ
- Justice – Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty. TJJ
- “You may be whatever you will resolve to be.” TJJ

Private and public life are subject to the same rules; and truth and manliness are two qualities that will carry you through this world much better than policy, or tact, or expediency, or any other word that was ever devised to conceal or mystify a deviation from a straight line. RLE

We must make up our minds to fight our battles ourselves, expect to receive aid from no one, and make every necessary sacrifice. RLE

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Discipline cannot be attained without constant watchfulness. RLE

Be strictly honorable in every act, and be not ashamed to do right. Acknowledge right to be your aim and strive to reach it. RLE

Honesty

You must study to be frank with the world: frankness is the child of honesty. RLE

Never do a wrong thing to make a friend or keep one; the man who requires you to do so is dearly purchased at a sacrifice. RLE

The real honest man is honest from conviction of what is right, not from policy. RLE

Duty

- Disregard public opinion when it interferes with your duty. TJJ

Do your duty. That is all the pleasure, all the comfort, all the glory we can enjoy in this world. RLE

Gain knowledge and virtue and learn your duty to God and your neighbor. That is the great object of life. RLE

The struggle which you describe your experience between doing what you ought and what you desire is common to all. You have only always to do what is right. It will become easier by practice, and you will enjoy in the midst of your trials the pleasure of an approving conscience. That will be worth everything else. RLE

You cannot be a true man until you learn to obey. RLE

Obedience to lawful authority is the foundation of manly character. RLE

We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and prudence, to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater distresses. RLE

We cannot be always successful and reverses must come. May God give us courage, endurance, and faith to strive to the end. RLE

God will shield us and give us success. RLE

Bear manfully misfortunes and all will come right in the end. RLE

Take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed. RLE

There is true glory and a true honor: the glory of duty done – the honor of the integrity of principle. RLE

You must not feel anxious or unsettled, but persevere in your duty. RLE

Godliness

- If you desire to be more heavenly minded, think more of the things of Heaven and less of the things of Earth. TJJ

Above all things, learn at once to worship your Creator and do His will as revealed in His Holy Book. RLE

No day should be lived unless it was begun with a prayer of thankfulness and an intercession for guidance. RLE

Learn to be good. Be true, kind and generous and pray earnestly to God to enable you to keep His commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. RLE

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O, that I were more worthy and more thankful for all that He has done and continues to do for me! RLE

God is our only refuge and strength. Let us humble ourselves before him. RLE

Contentment

God disposes. This ought to satisfy us. RLE

God knows what is best for us. RLE

I believe a kind God has ordered all things for our good. RLE

The ties to earth are taken, one by one, by our Merciful God to turn our hearts to Him and to show us that the object of this life is to prepare for a better and brighter world. RLE

My whole trust is in God, and I am ready for whatever He may ordain. RLE

With calm satisfaction, trust in God and leave results to Him. RLE