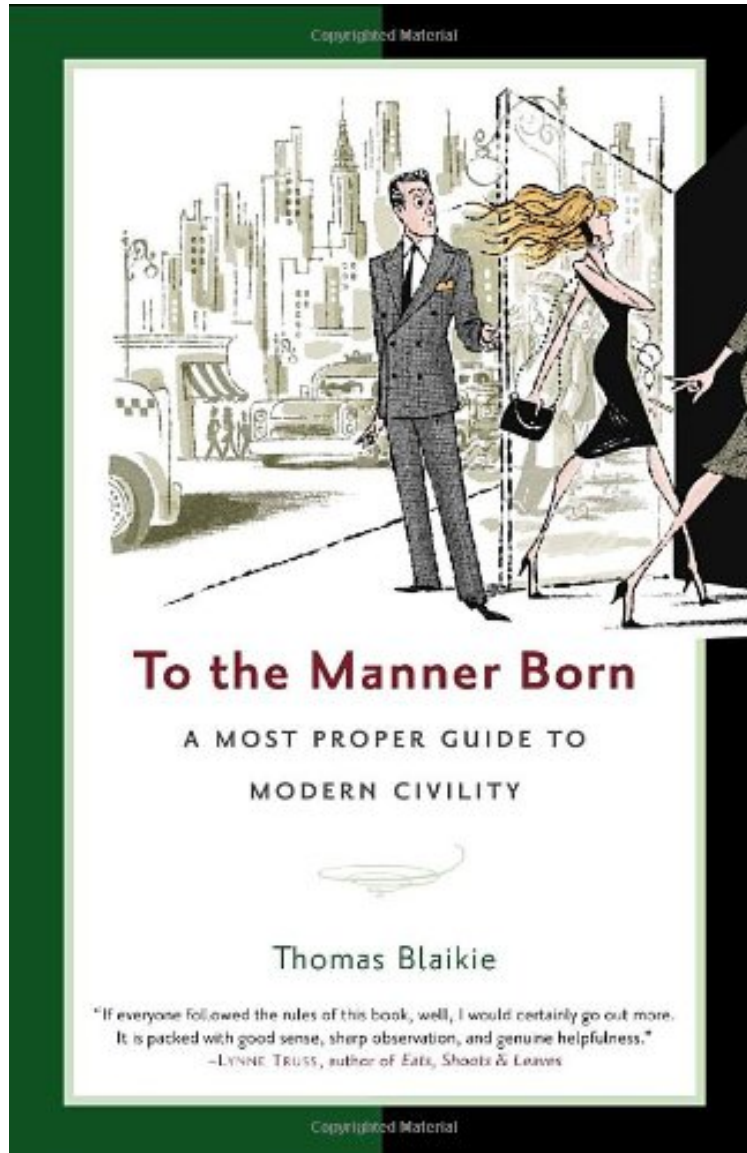


(Ebook pdf) To the Manner Born: A Most Proper Guide to Modern Civility

To the Manner Born: A Most Proper Guide to Modern Civility

Thomas Blaikie

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Thomas Blaikie : To the Manner Born: A Most Proper Guide to Modern Civility before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To the Manner Born: A Most Proper Guide to Modern Civility:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Ces Lawton My bad giving it to a middle schooler. Too mature 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Not what I was expecting...maybe modern civility should step back in time. By KI honestly can't give this even a one star rating. I was hoping this would more of a proper

English manners book to get a taste of what they used to be. Many of the suggestions in the book were directly opposite of what I would think is even polite. Maybe my expectations were just different, but after reading it half way, I decided to skim the last half and it just seemed to get worse, I wouldn't recommend...0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One StarBy REYES pADUAThe author is out of his mind, thinks he is in the 18th century.

Your friends neglect to RSVP to your party invitation . . . co-workers munch their pungent meals near your office . . . pedestrians shout into their cell phones and practically knock you to the pavement. Wishing that friends, family, colleagues, and oblivious strangers would mind their manners is lovely, but what about your own? You don't mean to be rude, but in today's carefree, high-tech, fast-paced world, how are you supposed to know what to do? Thankfully, Englishman Thomas Blaikie's witty and insightful guide will help you steer through this minefield of uncertainty and back onto the path toward civility—without a lot of fuss and bother. No need to worry about the proper way to eat soup or which is the salad fork. What Blaikie teaches you is more important: how and when to drop in on a friend, how to turn down suitors graciously, how to “move on” at a party, how to end a text-message conversation that's gone on just a bit too long, and how to cope with myriad other twenty-first-century social traumas. Always positive and cheerful, *The Manner Born* offers commonsense, practical solutions. And if you don't like someone else's manners, yes, you really should try to do something about it—in the nicest way possible, of course. “Thomas Blaikie is the perfect guide through the treacherous minefield of contemporary social mores: witty, amusingly abstruse, stylish and most importantly knowledgeable.” —Will Self, author of *Cock and Bull* “If everyone followed the rules of this book, well, I would certainly go out more. It is packed with good sense, sharp observation, and genuine helpfulness.” —Lynne Truss, author of *Eats, Shoots Leaves*

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 Manners in Public Where to begin?: “good morning,” “thank you,” pushing, and shoving—among other things. Dreadful, dreadful—let's rave on like Archie Bunker, such fun! It's frightful out on the streets. Surely a new Ice Age of bad manners is coming? There are the litterbugs, the pushers and shovers, the bellowers, the swearers—and that's just a start. What about this dreadful episode? The other day, Matt Lawson, forty-three, assistant financial director of a company that publishes trade magazines (*Dumper Truck Today* is a big seller), held the door open for a nice, middle-aged, vaguely spinsterish woman as she was coming out of a department store in Peterborough, a delightful dormitory town for London, and, would you believe it, she stalked straight through the door as if there was nobody there? Matt says this happens all the time, not just in Peterborough but also in London, where he works. “It would be nice if they said thank you,” he says, “but what can you do? That's how people are.” In the genteel cathedral city of Worcester, a similar thing happened. Some ladies failed to thank someone who had waited for them to come up a narrow stairs. In Manchester and London, standing in line for the bus has been abandoned in favor of a dog-eat-dog approach. Mrs. Gibbs, eighty-five, lives in Winchester; her husband, a solicitor, long dead. “I don't want to seem old-fashioned,” she begins, “but I'm sorry to say, people are in such a hurry. All these mothers with one child in a stroller, several more rampaging about. They've got no time to take any notice of anybody. People hold doors open for me, that kind of thing. They can see I'm an old woman. But the other day I thanked someone and he grunted in this peculiar way as if to say, ‘That's enough of that. I've done you a favor, now clear off!’ Not terribly charming.” And what about this? One of those van-type vehicles in which celebrities are conveyed was once seen parked outside a tailor's in Spitalfields, a very desirable newly yuppified district of London. A rumor, unconfirmed to this day, went round that David Beckham was being fitted for a suit. The van was assumed to be unoccupied except by the driver, but imagine the excitement when the back door slid open and a jeweled hand, clutching a Coke can and associated sandwich wrappings, emerged into view, sank graciously toward the gutter, and there deposited the can. Could this have been the hand of Posh, glamorously littering the streets? What shall we do with them? Horsecorping? Boot camp? National Service? Well, it may not be the end of the world, but let's admit it, we've all got something, some discourtesy that occurs in public, which we find absolutely infuriating. It's no good resigning yourself, like Matt, or apologizing, like Mrs. Gibbs. You've got to do something, especially if you're one of the millions who complain about antisocial behavior. You can't expect the police to attend every time someone drops some litter or raises their voice. The good old British “keep your head down and don't make a fuss” approach has had its day. Not that it ever really was that. Nothing may have been said, but the accompanying withering looks were full strength and top-notch in quality. Actors would have given anything to achieve such silent power. But nobody today is going to take any notice of a look, however withering. •If you hold a door open for someone or wait to let them pass and they don't thank you, say loudly, “Thank you so much.” In extreme cases, you can pursue them and say, “I'm so sorry. Did you forget to thank?” Don't be put off by an abusive response. If enough people start doing this, the message will get through. •If you're the person not thanking, you probably don't mean any harm. You're just not awake. •Always say “Good morning,” “Hello,” or “Hi” to shop assistants, receptionists, and so forth. The French do this without thinking about it. In some places, you'll be met with astonishment or bewilderment. Don't be discouraged. It's the right thing to do. •If there's no line for the bus, just a mosh pit, it would be nice to think that enough people would band together to do something about it. But they probably won't. Nevertheless, there are

other ways of making a fuss. Write to the local paper, complain to the city council, the bus company. Don't listen to people who sneer at the British and their eternal lines, or queues. Queues are fair and just. They're worth fighting for.

- In a crowd, few follow the example of the late Bubbles Rothermere, who would beat the back of anyone in the way with her tiny fists. But many have a policy of massively increasing speed and whacking everybody else out of the way. This isn't very nice but is less easy to resist. They've usually disappeared by the time you realize what has happened. Protest charmingly—"I'm so sorry. I didn't realize I was in the way"—if you get the chance. Or just don't get out of the way. Stand your ground and see what happens.
- If you see someone dropping litter, pick it up and hand it back to them. "I think you dropped this." It sometimes works. If they turn nasty, say, "It's quite all right. I'll throw it away for you." Then make a run for it.

Children In public places there are two sorts: ones who are unaccompanied, ones who aren't. Neither are quite as they should be. "I was in the newsagents only last week," says Mrs. Gibbs. "Two little boys, both under ten, rushed in making an awful noise, barged in front of me, and shouted at the shopkeeper, 'Give us some chewing gum.' I wasn't going to stand there doing nothing, I can tell you. I said, 'Stop that racket, wait in the queue, if you wouldn't mind, and when it's your turn you might try "please" and "thank you."' The shopkeeper and the one other customer in the shop were horrified. 'You ought to watch out,' they said, 'they might have had a gun.' I couldn't believe it. What nonsense! Three adults in the shop and two little boys, and the only person who wasn't afraid of them was an old woman of eighty-five!"

At the airport, setting out with a party of ten for a villa holiday in Majorca, Zoe Miller, twenty-five, just starting out in PR and a graduate of the University of Kent (one of those subjects that are hard to explain), was fed up with "all these parents who seemed to think the departure lounge was just a big playpen for their children. One of the fathers was making the most noise, pretending to be a roller coaster or something." Zoe is rather against children in general, which Mrs. Gibbs isn't. But perhaps Zoe has a point. It probably wasn't just thoughtlessness, either. Many parents now like to make a conspicuous parade of their parenting, and what better opportunity than the departure lounge? Did she do anything about it? She is shocked. "Oh, no. That wouldn't be right, would it? I'm not a busybody. It's just my personal opinion that they're annoying." Zoe's not thinking straight. She's being too nice. It isn't "just my personal opinion." She's got a fair point. A public space is a public space. It isn't for one special interest group to take over.

- If unaccompanied children are behaving inconsiderately in public—making a lot of noise, dropping litter, cutting lines—intervene if it is safe to do so and you are likely to get somewhere, in other words if there is a majority of adults present.
- Speak firmly but politely.
- Most children, even "well-brought-up" ones, will take advantage if they sense that adults are afraid of them.
- Most "antisocial behavior" is perpetrated by children and teenagers. If adults won't step in to put a stop to minor outbreaks, it isn't very surprising that some young people will graduate to more advanced forms.
- Parents of small children: It may be difficult to keep your offspring amused, especially if waiting in a public place, but try to show consideration for others. Once, at a rather serious concert, I sat in front of a child who had been supplied with a rattly teddy to keep her occupied for the duration.
- You're more likely to get people's backs up if your underlying attitude seems to be that your child has a right to rampage about. If you are apologetic and make some attempt to restrain, you will get a more indulgent response.
- If you are exasperated by unfettered children (for instance, strange child actually crawling over you in a café; mother looking on, waiting for you to coo admiration), you're going to have to say something. Don't be relativist; don't think, "Who am I to tell others what to do?" Stand up for what you believe in! Get a move on: atms and checkouts "Why don't people know how to use a cashpoint machine?" Zoe asks, referring i...