

How Rules of Etiquette Started

By Moira Russell (Author) dated: 26/6/09

Ever wondered why we have to be polite when we ask something from a stranger? Or why we have to set our silverware at four o'clock once we're done with our meal? Or why we have to wait for others to be served first before we serve ourselves at dinner? Well, it could have been a lot more convenient if these rules do not exist, but as it is, they exist and they need to be followed. Unless of course if you are willing to be labelled as uncouth, rude and inconsiderate.

The aforementioned examples are just tiny fractions of indelible etiquette that we were taught since infancy. And since then, we had to practice etiquette in all forms and on all occasions where they are prescribed. So how did these hard-and-fast rules of socialization started?

Well, about a few hundred years ago, some thoughtful people layered the basic rules of living which made interaction with other people which supposedly made socialisation a bit more peaceful, more amiable and more comfortable. These rules were not so clear-cut back then, instead they just followed what whims the snobbish aristocrats had. So since all things these snob cohorts had been fashionable, everyone followed or tried to follow, including Charles I and Charles II of England who were instrumental in the transmission of French court behaviours to English lands.

Every aristocrat followed suit and so the prescribed court behaviours were layered down- these included wearing outrageously tight corsets and skirts for females. And as these people try to develop higher orders of social behaviours, they tossed in countless rules of etiquette to suit their need to be different from everyone else and to satisfy their snooty behaviours.

One thing led to another and we now have the slightly modified versions of what the nobles used to have as etiquette. We don't have to wear fancy wigs or make-ups that ruin the face anymore but we still have to observe some of the basic etiquette followed a few hundred years ago.

Nowadays, basic etiquette is no longer very elaborate and some have already lost their stiff appeal. In fact, it may even be said that some rules of etiquette have become quite loose that they no longer need to be observed on a number of occasions. Nonetheless, there are still a lot of them that one should know and practice as they pop up every now and then in our daily lives.

The rules of etiquette are definitely embedded into our culture, regardless of what part of the globe we came from. These are not strict rules, but they are permanent and firmly established codes and guidelines that were passed down for countless years to serve beneficial purposes for us. They help greatly in establishing basic rules of good manners and conduct which give mostly everyone equal opportunities to be respected even by those people who live in a higher strata of the society.

Through the rules of etiquette, we can easily polish ourselves to become polite to everyone's eyes without fear of prejudice because of our station. And through these, we can also identify those people who are supposedly more learned and cultured than we are yet they fail to observe simple good manners.

Etiquette is closely intertwined with our culture, our daily activities and our personal lives. And it always be.

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