

Politeness and youth

- 1 For older generations, there were simple rules everyone had to consider about manners. It was normal behavior for men to hold doors open for women. It was rude if you didn't say "please" or "thank you." You were judged negatively if you didn't give up your seat to an older person. So, are these rules still important to young people today? Or are attitudes to appropriate behavior changing, and is technology having an effect?
- 2 Unsurprisingly, young people's attitudes differ greatly from older generations' when it comes to polite behavior. Many do not agree with rules such as giving up their seat on a train for older people or holding a door open for a woman, as is the custom in many European countries. In my opinion, this is completely understandable. As a woman, I do not feel the need for a man to hold open a door. The bottom line is, I am just as able as any man. So, if our attitudes are changing, what are the new rules for living?
- 3 Respecting someone's personal space has become an increasingly important factor in modern manners. While you might not be expected to give up your seat on a train, the majority of people consider playing music loudly when traveling to be impolite. By and large, very few young people would disagree that speaking loudly on your phone near others is unacceptable behavior. Our phones allow us to escape our immediate environment to some extent and concentrate on something else, but we should still think about the other people around us.
- 4 Phones, and especially messaging, are a central part of most modern communication. Much of this communication happens in a public place, but we still expect a certain amount of privacy. Consequently, reading someone's messages over their shoulder is almost guaranteed to receive a negative reaction. Also, although social media feels like a public space, never be the first to talk about someone else's news. Treat online conversations like face-to-face ones—don't ignore people, don't be too direct, and always respond to questions.
- 5 Technology, though, is not the only area in which etiquette is changing. Dinner tables and restaurants have nearly always gone hand in hand with good manners. It used to be considered rude to put your elbows on the table, but now hardly anyone will judge you for this. Tipping for good service is also changing. Older people are more likely to tip than younger people and they are also more generous. In my experience, younger people only tip when service is genuinely good—I probably do not tip as much as my parents do.
- 6 Often young people are described as rude by older generations. However, let's get something straight—it is not true that their manners have got worse; it's simply that the rules are changing. A firm handshake was once the standard polite greeting, whereas for many younger people simply smiling, using a spoken greeting, or kissing on the cheeks is considered a polite greeting. Neither older nor younger are being rude; they are simply following their own generation's rules.

GLOSSARY

direct (adj) saying what you really think in a very clear and honest way

etiquette (n) a set of rules for behaving correctly in social situations



Using topic sentences to understand main ideas

Scanning

C GLOBAL READING

Topic sentences are usually one of the first two sentences of each paragraph. They contain the main idea of the paragraph and everything in that paragraph should support the main idea. Reading topic sentences is a good way to scan a text quickly.

1 Read *Politeness and youth* and select the topic sentences in paragraphs 2–5.

2 Read the text again and match the main ideas A–D with paragraphs 2–5.

- A Consider the people around you. ____
- B The rules for eating out. ____
- C The changing rules of politeness. ____
- D The impact of technology on politeness. ____

D CLOSE READING

Read *Politeness and youth* again and complete the summary of the text.

Attitudes to polite behavior are changing over time. For example, younger people are less likely to let someone else have their ¹ _____ or hold a door open for a woman. Personal space is important, and it is rude to have a loud ² _____ on public transportation. Although modern communication happens in public spaces, it should still be ³ _____. You should not read a person's ⁴ _____ or tell other people someone's news on ⁵ _____. In the past, people thought it was rude to have your ⁶ _____ on the table during meals, but this is not the case anymore. When eating out, older people are much more likely to ⁷ _____ the staff than younger people.

E CRITICAL THINKING

1 What behavior do you find rude in other people? Do you think other people would find any of your behavior rude?

I really dislike it when ...

2 How do behaviors related to topics 1–3 change when meeting with the different groups of people below?

Friends Older people Work colleagues

- 1 Greetings
- 2 Personal space
- 3 Table manners