



George Washington's Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation (Little Books of Wisdom)

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George Washington's Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation (Little Books of Wisdom) Details

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From Reader Review George Washington's Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation (Little Books of Wisdom) for online ebook

Ashley says

Though an interesting look at what constituted proper behavior for upper class men in the 18th century, this edition is not particularly clear on the actual origin of the rules (which were not written by Washington, but translated by him). It is unlikely that most people from other walks of life followed these even at the time, which is why the comments in other reviews to the effect that people should follow these more strictly today amuse me a little. Though yes, there are some very good suggestions and much of what is suggested does contribute toward good manners, it's important to remember the cultural milieu of these things.

One of the odder aspects is the emphasis on social rank, to include such things as what order a group of people should walk in, and who you can and cannot lodge with, even if the invitation is extended (also based on rank). Though there may be limited situations in which knowing these things might be useful today, I don't know very many people that are exceptionally aware of their rank in comparison to others. Some good suggestions, but also many suggestions that, if followed to the letter, would complicate a situation more than help it.

So, in my view, it's mostly useful as a historical document that does help to illustrate the path to present-day good manners. It should not, for most people, be a strict rulebook to be taken at face value. More importantly, published editions should offer more analysis of the origins of the rules than this edition seemed to do.

Gerald says

I recently received this little book from a friend written by my relative -- not long ago I discovered that President George Washington was my 3 cousin, 6 times removed. The 110 Rules which are set forth in this little 30-page book are interesting but understandably written in what from today's point of view is very archaic language. Almost all of Washington's Rules are what would generally be considered common sense. An example of both the archaic language and common sense to which I refer is Rule #79: "Be not apt to relate news if you know not the truth thereof. In discoursing of things, name not your author; always a secret discover not." Another interesting one is #9: "Spit not in the fire, nor stoop low before it. Neither put your hands into the flames to warm them, nor set your feet upon the fire, especially if there be meat before it." A final example is #82: "Undertake not what you cannot perform, but be careful to keep your promise."

[Book 49 of 2014 Target 50 (Jan-5; Feb-3; Mar-4; Apr-3; May 4; Jun-4; Jul-5; Aug-1; Sep-5; Oct-10; Nov-3; Dec-3)]

Kristina Alley says

Enjoyed learning about the rules of civility that George Washington wrote when he was only 15. One of my favorites was Rule 83d: "When you deliver a matter do it without Passion & with Discretion, however mean ye Person be you do it too." Think on that for a few minutes. What do you think he meant with that statement? I enjoyed thinking about it. I am challenged to maintain appropriate and careful etiquette and manners though much of that has been lost in our generation and youth.

Michelle says

Originally written in about 1595, (good manners never really go out of style do they?)these rules governed the conduct of our first president George Washington. Here is the first:

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

This one had my boys laughing:

13. Kill no vermin, or fleas, lice, ticks, etc. in the sight of others; if you see any filth or thick spittle put your foot dexterously upon it; if it be upon the clothes of your companions, put it off privately, and if it be upon your own clothes, return thanks to him who puts it off.

Though I'm not sure I agree with the first part, I heartily agree with the latter. Only The best kind of friend and companion will tell you if there is spinach in your teeth or toilet paper on your shoe!

Pamela says

Some of my favorite rules:

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

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

#19 Let your Countenance be pleasant but in Serious Matters Somewhat grave.

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

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

#45 Being to advice 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 Cholar but do it with all Sweetness and Mildness.

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

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

#110 Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.

Jennifer says

I read the version sold at Mount Vernon, as it caught my eye in the gift shop. Nearly all the rules are perfectly applicable in a modern age, and definitely made me think about where I'm falling short!

Reaffirms the notion that Washington really was as correct and poised in reality as one imagines in the abstract- but with a sense of humor. Delightful (tiny) read!

Dan says

We are told that at age 14, George Washington wrote down 110 rules under the title "Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation." I doubt that anyone would question that he lived his life by these rules.

Some, of course, we would consider antiquated, but there are many gems here: Rule #1 - Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present;" Rule #6 - Sleep not when others speak, sit not when others stand, speak not when you should hold your peace, walk not when others stop; Rule #110 - "labour to keep alive in your breast that little celestial fire called conscience."

An excellent and natural place to start if you are interested in what it takes to form a more civil society.

Belen By says

I was amazed at this book and all the rules that it gave. My teacher recommended this book for me because I was doing a research paper on rudeness for my college paper and I was at the beginning thinking that this book was not going to provide me with the information that I was going to need. I was wrong and when I began to read the book I ABSOLUTELY loved it!!! Now I can see why my teacher loved this book.. It provided all the morals that people should have nowadays but lack now..

Steve Scott says

Excellent.

This was given to me by some dear friends tonight, along with one of Donald Trump's books, "The Art Of The Comeback". They suggested I compare the two.

Trump loses. Big time.

I'd recommend this to anyone interested in developing their leadership traits, character, and overall reputation. Some of the suggestions are anachronistic, but a great number are still applicable. I wish I'd had

this when I was younger.

It's English is slightly archaic, but not so opaque that a bit of patience and consideration can't crack it. It's a slim volume. You'll be done in no time.

Joshua says

Supposedly written by Washington in his youth, it is said that he based it on rules of etiquette written by French Jesuit monks in the 15th century. Some of the language is a little tough to understand and some of the rules are antiquated. All in all though, a very good reference book for how to act appropriately in a variety of different situations. He has stuff like, and I paraphrase: "Don't laugh at your own jokes", "Don't ask about someone's personal business" and "Don't talk poorly of someone who is not present". Good stuff.

Jay says

A very interesting little book on manners and courtesy. There are a few times that I needed to stop and 'translate' in my head what was meant, but most of the rules hold up very well. Someone else mentioned that it would be good for a teenager, and that sounds about right. Some of it is self-evident or explanatory.

Kathryn says

Have endured a week of people that really need to read this book! Then I realized I never rated it here. Thinking over the little rules here really makes me smile, at least! It's great fun with the writing style and manners covered. I seem to remember something about "do not bedew another man with your spittle by approaching too close when you speak." ;-p And while I think we can thank our lucky stars that some rules (such as how to politely pick lice off oneself in public) are no longer relevant, most of modern America could learn a great deal of practical civility from their Founding Father!

"Copied out by hand as a young man aspiring to the status of Gentleman, George Washington's 110 rules were based on a set of rules composed by French Jesuits in 1595."

Ron says

Every American ought to read--no, ought to own this book. It's only 44 pages, hardly a book at all. And the Rules of Civility are more a curiosity than anything else. But each of us should read and ponder the four addresses, especially Washington's 1796 statement on the occasion of him not seeking a third term as President, once a year.

A great read.

Willow Redd says

At the age of 14, George Washington translated and copied down a list of 110 French maxims on civility and decent behavior. Reading these, I'm willing to bet that Washington would be appalled at the current state of civility in the world, but then, I'm sure there were also plenty of people in his own time that appalled him if he truly believed and followed all of these rules.

I think my favorite of the bunch is number 12: "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." Firstly, I'm willing to bet the French writer included the eyebrow thing just because he couldn't do it, and felt annoyed when others could. Second, we really should use the word "bedew" more often these days.

You may remember hearing this book get a mention on Aaron Sorkin's The West Wing. President Bartlett is seen reading the book at one point and explains to his aide Charlie how the book came to be. Then he calls Washington a "poncy little twerp" after reading one of the maxims (the 2nd one, I believe. I'm too tired to Google it right now. The quote from Bartlett could be off as well, but he definitely calls George "poncy").

Bookworm Amir says

Well for me, basic principles (what we now call protocol) on how to conduct yourself (in terms of clothing, eating, behaving, conversing).

But truth be told - a lot more people, the public really, should read this. Not everyone has had protocol training. But even so, this is something that we learn, and learn even more throughout our lifetime. And its a set of skills that will stick with you throughout your dealings with other people in whatever way.

Manners are but fading - and we need a renaissance. This is one small step to begin with.

I recommend this book for those who wish to be a gentleman. Unless your life says not to, well.
