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## Etiquette Can Be Murder

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*I have noticed that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.*

E.V. Lucas

### Waiting



I recently received a response to an article I had submitted to a publisher, and it came as a complete surprise—because I had offered it for publication over two years ago. It took so long to get their answer that I had entirely forgotten about it, and I had to check my records to see when I sent it out. At the time they had promised a response to every submission, and I didn't know whether to laugh, groan, or be amazed that they finally kept their word.

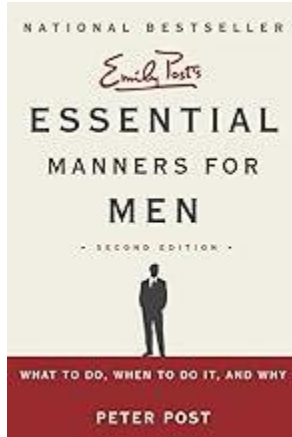
The delayed response in this instance is probably a case of “better late than never” since no harm was done. However, a lot of things in my life seem to be running late nowadays, or at least taking an inordinately long time, and I have to admit to some frustration with the constant waiting.

I've been dealing with agents who take months to get back to you regarding a manuscript, with contractors who can't even tell you when you might get on their list for needed repairs, and with meal-kit deliveries that are so delayed by weather that the food is ruined when it arrives. Pharmacies are behind on getting needed medications, vets can't see your pets for weeks, and clothing is backordered until the appropriate season is over.

Of course, most of these issues are beyond the control of the participants, since agents, contractors and vets are overwhelmed with work, and weather and shipping delays are sometimes unavoidable. So I try to live with those, even if they are irritating.

But personal tardiness is also a source of annoyance. I'm not saying that everyone can be on time for everything—stuff happens. But some people are chronically late, and I've recently attended meetings where the speaker didn't show up on time, had workers descend on my house hours after they were expected, and dealt with dinner guests who always arrive long after the meal has grown cold.





So, of course, I turned to my etiquette book collection to see what the authors would have to say about avoidable delays and today's common lack of punctuality.

The authors' general opinion seems to be that, to paraphrase Karen Joy Fowler, arriving late is a way of saying that your own time is more valuable than the time of the person who waited for you.

In fact, according to *Emily Post's Essential Manners for Men* by Peter Post, "There is one inviolable rule... Be there on time. Lateness is never a mark of importance. Rather, it is a mark of rudeness, arrogance, or disorganization." And Letitia Baldrige's *New Complete Guide to Executive Manners* states that you should "Be on time for your appointments—if you care how people perceive you. If you keep someone waiting, he or she will resent you."

The best way to handle the habitually late guest, per *Emily Post's Etiquette*, is to build a fifteen-minute grace period into your schedule to allow leeway for those who are delayed by accident. You may then carry on serving meals, leaving for the play or game, or beginning whatever event you have organized. There is no need to change your schedule just because "Mrs. Vanity Selfish didn't feel like getting there on time."



So, I am going to start inviting my guests to arrive fifteen minutes earlier than they need to. Then I plan to stop feeling guilty when someone who is chronologically challenged arrives too late and misses out on hot food or anything else I have planned. Maybe that will cut down—at least a little bit—on my level of personal frustration.

What frustrates you, and how do you deal with it? Drop me a line at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#) and let me know.

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## Latest News

An update on my latest writing news: I just finished a very helpful class on *Self-editing and Revision* by James Jackson, and I will soon be starting a class on *Killer Suspense* by Simon Wood. These classes by published authors are offered through my membership in Sisters in Crime and are very useful as I continue trying to improve my writing.

I also have a new Facebook author page, which you can find at [Facebook](#), or by searching for Lucinda Gerlitz Author.

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I would love for my readers to get in touch! You can drop me a note on my contact page at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#).

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And for my animal photo this month, I have to include a picture of my old neighbors, whom I miss very much.

