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## Etiquette Can Be Murder

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*Etiquette is alive and well, but don't mistake it for a set of stuffy old rules. What matters most in manners is the manner of the person—their thoughtfulness and caring—not the manners that they've learned.*

The Emily Post Institute, *Mind Your Manners*, 2024

### Pop Quiz

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season! I enjoyed time off and being with family and friends, along with receiving some much-appreciated gifts. One particular present, from my brilliant sister, Teresa, was a complete surprise. She somehow found me a game of etiquette trivia produced by the Emily Post Institute, called *Mind Your Manners*.



The game features 150 questions designed to test your etiquette knowledge. My sister knew I would get a kick out of it, and I thought it would be fun to share a few questions with you as a January pop quiz. Answers appear at the bottom of the page, but it would be bad manners to peek!

#### QUESTION 1:

What is a so-called “cut direct”?

- A. A hurtful statement intended to injure someone’s feelings
- B. The proper way of slicing meat at a formal dinner party
- C. A total snub: in response to a greeting one looks away and doesn’t answer



QUESTION 2:

Do you serve a salad before or after the entrée?

- A. Either way, depending on the rest of the meal
- B. Follow the French style and serve it after
- C. If you're in America, serve it before the entrée



QUESTION 3:

TRUE or FALSE: You find a shard of glass in your dinner. You should alert the host immediately.



QUESTION 4:

TRUE or FALSE: At a buffet, you should use the size of the serving utensil to indicate how much of the dish to take.



#### QUESTION 5:

It used to be an etiquette rule that you shouldn't use a knife to cut a salad. Why?



#### ANSWERS:

1. C – and A should never be an option.
2. A – a good salad is always welcome either way.
3. TRUE: You should discreetly ignore anything unexpected that isn't dangerous (such as an inchworm in the salad or a strand of hair in the soup), but a shard of glass may be a hazard to someone else. You should speak up in order to save others from injury.
4. FALSE: You should always take a smaller portion and return later if you want more.
5. The vinegar in salad dressing would react with real silver and ruin the knife's edge.

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How did you do on the quiz? Drop me a line at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#) and let me know.

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#### A Reader Asks

As a follow up to the pop quiz, one of my proofreaders asked what a person could do that would make them worthy of being snubbed, or receiving the “cut direct” in social situations.

As suggested by Emily Post, here are a few behaviors that are deserving of social ostracism:

- **Blatant rudeness:** This includes things like interrupting, speaking offensively, or making derogatory remarks
- **Dishonesty:** Lying or being deceitful in personal or professional relationships
- **Disrespect:** Showing a lack of respect for others, including being ungrateful or inconsiderate of their feelings

- **Intrusiveness:** Overstepping personal boundaries or being overly intrusive into someone's private matters
- **Betrayal:** Acts of betrayal, such as breaking confidences or backstabbing

Of course, Post's etiquette books emphasize the importance of handling such situations with grace and dignity. Instead of engaging in public confrontations, she advises politely but firmly removing oneself from the company of someone exhibiting these behaviors.

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Note to readers: I enjoy reading etiquette books for fun, since they give an entertaining look at the social customs of different time periods. I actually have quite a collection of manuals, which range in coverage from nineteenth century college manners to today's proper dog-walking protocol. So, if you have any questions about current or old-fashioned etiquette, send me a note at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#) and I'll do my best to find an answer. And you might even make it into my next newsletter!

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## Latest News



I took most of December off from writing, but I'll be hopping back into the routine with the Sisters in Crime "January Jumpstart". The jumpstart is a program that allows you to set writing goals for the month, track your activities with a software program, and report your progress to the group, while receiving encouragement and support from fellow members. (For anyone who doesn't know, Sisters in Crime is an organization that was founded in 1986 to promote the development of women crime writers. It now supports male authors as well, and I've been a member for many years.)

To get back on track this month, I've also signed up for a class on "Putting the Joy Back Into Writing," which promises to get the New Year off to a fun start.

As always, if you know anyone who might be interested in signing up for my email list, please pass along my opt-in information at: [Newsletter - Lucinda Gerlitz](#).

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## Contact Information

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

You can also support my writing by following me on my:

[Instagram Page](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

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For my usual animal picture, I'd like to pay tribute to my sister's cat, Allie, who was one month shy of her 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday when she passed away on January 4th. RIP, Allie.

