
Etiquette Can Be Murder

Good manners are part of the social contract we voluntarily enter into, in order to create a more harmonious society. And where can we benefit more from a little harmony than in the boudoir?

Taylor and Sharkey, *Nerve's Guide to Sex Etiquette*, 2004

21st Century Sex Etiquette

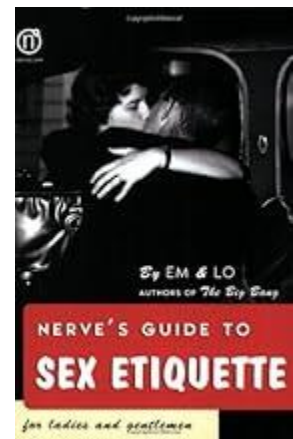


When I asked for reader questions last month, a friend—perhaps inspired by the approach of Valentine’s Day and definitely under the influence of a rather large margarita—asked if there are any etiquette rules associated with sex. The answer is yes—as with most types of interactions between humans, there are not only tacit expectations of certain behaviors, there are also actual manuals on the subject. In fact, I currently own three such guidebooks.

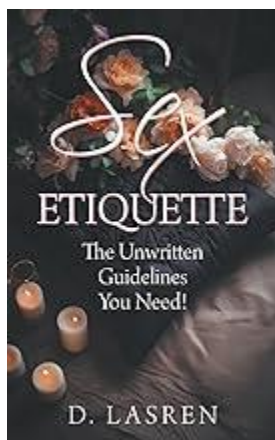
The oldest manual I have, *Sexual Etiquette 101 & More* by Robert Hatcher et al., was written in 2001 and is a rather clinical booklet reminiscent of high school sex education materials. It contains detailed drawings of the various body parts with their technical names, directions for the proper use of prophylactics, and warnings about the transmission of STDs. In fact, its stated goal is to “help you prevent the possibly negative and harmful side of sexuality so that you can enjoy the pleasurable and beautiful side.”

My second manual, *Nerve's Guide to Sex Etiquette* by Taylor and Sharkey, sets a goal of making sure you avoid sexual faux pas. It uses much less technical language (to put it mildly—the slang can be rather crude), and it covers everything from casual pickups to using the restroom while your partner is brushing their teeth. (Proper etiquette apparently requires that you don’t do this until you have been in a relationship for at least nine months.)

This guide features an interesting chart which lays out a suggested timeline for various intimacy milestones in a new relationship. The markers range from a chaste kiss on the cheek for the first date through quickies and various types of sex acts all the way up to celebrating the happy couple’s one-year anniversary. There are also “Rules for Disengagement” and tips for dealing with one’s ex.



The third and most recent manual I own, *Sex Etiquette: The Unwritten Guidelines You Need!* by



D. Lasren, was written in 2023. It covers topics ranging from “The Science of Sex” to sex addiction, blackmail, ghosting, and commitment phobias. In discussing sex itself, it offers rules for “certain key points that when ignored could ruin the experience and in turn a relationship.” According to this manuscript, the most important guidelines to adhere to are:

- Talk about the things you want and need.
- Proper hygiene is a sign of respect.
- Be careful how you handle your partner.
- Quickies are additions to your normal sex life, not replacements.
- Be clear about all fetishes and fantasies.
- Don’t neglect the importance of setting the mood.

Although all three manuals take different approaches to discussing sexual etiquette, there is one common denominator among them. Every one of the books shares the author’s conviction that the most important ingredients for proper sexual behavior are communication and consent. As long as relationships are completely consensual and everyone is treated with respect and compassion, pretty much anything else goes, and you should feel free to “have fun and enjoy one another’s company.”

Additional Sexual Etiquette Tips

Just for grins, I thought I would throw in a selection of random sexual etiquette tips I came across in *Nerve’s Guide to Sex Etiquette*—or at least a few of the ones I could find that were neither too graphic nor pornographic:

- A gentleman or lady does not attempt a pickup at a doctor’s office, at a funeral, or in front of someone’s parents.
- A lady or gentleman never compliments someone on a body part during an attempted pickup.
- A gentleman or lady may “Google” someone before or after a first date, though we do not recommend admitting to the web search. A gentleman or lady *never* Googles their date’s ex.
- Only a savage fails to be on time for a date.
- A gentleman never orders for a lady—she is an adult, who can make up her own mind and speak for herself.
- Fantasizing about one’s ex is permissible, but sharing this fantasy with one’s current partner is not.
- Pursuing a member of a friend’s nuclear family romantically should never be done casually. However, long-lost third cousins are fair game.
- An active gentleman or lady always launders his or her sheets between sleepover guests.
- A civilized lady or gentleman always has a guest toothbrush handy, still in the packaging,

just in case a guest requests one. However, “only a vulgarian” keeps an entire drawer of them as if they were a dentist.

- On a one-night stand, it is permissible to make a stealth exit from your partner’s bed, but it is gauche to request that your partner leave before daylight.

Do you have any special sexual etiquette tips to share? Drop me a line at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#) and let me know.

A Reader Asks

The reader who asked about guidelines for sex etiquette also had two specific questions: She wanted to know who is responsible for furnishing the condoms, and when and how to decide that it is time to leave.



According to *Nerve’s Guide to Sex Etiquette*, even if you or your partner use another form of birth control, you should always have a supply of fresh, quality condoms on hand. “Only geezers, sexists, and idiots believe that it is a masculine responsibility. A lady or gentleman takes sole responsibility for their own sexual health.”

As for when to leave, “If you are the host and the sun has already set, you may ask your date to vacate the premises *only* in case of emergencies: your parents are coming early the next morning, you suffer from a sleep apnea disorder, your house is on fire.” Otherwise, it is only good manners to suggest that your visitor spend the night.



If you are the guest, “you may politely excuse yourself, though a thorough explanation for and demonstration of regret over your departure is required.” If you do spend the night, the host must always offer coffee or tea in the morning. But “a gentleman or lady does not outstay his or her welcome. In the first month of a relationship, one should depart as soon as the crossword has been completed.”

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 traditional Islamic manners to etiquette in today's modern workplace. 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!

Latest News

First, I'd like to wish everyone a happy Valentine's Day. Ken and I will be celebrating with dinner out and a dessert buffet, which I am definitely looking forward to even if I am a self-proclaimed grinch about the holiday. (I just think the traditional celebrations of love leave too many people feeling lonely or left out.)



The rest of February promises to be busy, as I have signed up for two webinars on book marketing and one on "Mastering Suspense, Structure, and Plot."

I am also looking into the possibility of converting my newsletter into a blog on Substack, so I will be investigating what that would entail. I'd love to know if any of you have experience with Substack, or any thoughts about changing the way you receive the newsletter. You can get in touch with me at [Contact - Lucinda Gerlitz](#).



In terms of writing, I will be finishing up my changes to the latest book and sending the manuscript back to my editor for copy editing.

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](#).

Contact Information

I love having my readers 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](#) or my [Facebook Page](#).

And for my usual animal picture, here is Izzie trying to relax a bit.

