



# Modern Manners

If the little Lords and Ladies of your manor act more like *Lord of the Flies*, a crash course in modern etiquette might be just the thing to restore civility.

Written by **Cris Phillips-Georg**

Does the word “etiquette” conjure images of stern, well-starched, pearl-clad ladies sipping tea with pinkies raised? Or maybe, like us, you just don’t give a flip where the fork goes. The children-should-be-seen-and-not-heard era of parenting is gasping its last breath. But, for all of our hip, modern efforts to “validate” and “empower” our generation’s precious offspring, basic manners seem to have fallen by the wayside. (Hey you, talking on your cell phone at the checkout counter and letting your five-year-old call grown-ups by their first names - tune in! We’re talking about manners over here!)

So, if we aren’t trying to turn our mini-mes into Stepford children, is formal etiquette training really necessary? Etiquette expert Dannie Fowler, owner of The Etiquette School of Florida, says yes! The purpose of etiquette, she explains, isn’t about place settings and how to butter your bread, but rather, “to prepare our children to confidently and successfully navigate any social setting they enter. Etiquette is about making others feel comfortable when they are around you.” Hmm. You mean our indoor-voice-resisting, conversation-interrupting children will someday have to navigate a world outside of Chuck E. Cheese’s? And though we may find their dinnertime burping concertos and macaroni-and-cheese finger paintings “inspired,” others just find them gross? Who knew?

“Etiquette rules do change with the times, but good manners are always in style.”

Okay, we concede! Our little darlings often act more like little devils. So, where do we begin? Times have changed and lace-gloved cotillions aren’t exactly our generation’s thang. Fowler asserts, “Etiquette rules do change with the times, but good manners are always in style.”

So what can you expect from the typical etiquette class? Usually, content is similar: Greetings & introductions, place settings & table manners (the ‘don’t slurp your soup’ stuff), wardrobe & appearance (including hygiene), telephone etiquette, party manners, and thank you notes. What’s refreshingly different is the approach instructors are using to make these timeless concepts relevant to modern families.

Fowler says, of her classes at The Etiquette School of Florida, "My focus is always on fun. I use skits, role-play, memory tricks, cool facts, and lots and lots of humor." Fowler has also had tremendous success offering themed etiquette classes. In addition to standard Fine Dining classes (for those who do care where the fork goes), Fowler offers Aborigine Etiquette, a hilarious week-long workshop for boys hosted at Outback Steakhouse, where students paint their faces with warrior paint, learn Aussie-speak, and generally have a great time learning to tame their inner wild child. This fall, Fowler will offer a new themed class called Etiquette Rocks. It is a humor-filled "be a star but don't behave like one" class at Hard Rock Hotel.

While a cleverly-themed class helps get kids off on the right social foot, Fowler reminds us that learning good etiquette begins at home and takes practice, practice, practice. That's why the Mantra of Modern Manners (a.k.a. the #1 etiquette rule every parent should know) is: Monkey See, Monkey Do! ... We know. We know! It's annoying to us, too...but the truth is kids really do mimic their parents. That means we have to model good manners in order to instill them. So turn off that cell phone and start rockin' those pleases and thank yous. Make practicing good manners a regular part of your family culture. Begin with table manners (right after you start eating together as a family, that is). [www.etiquetteschoolofflorida.com](http://www.etiquetteschoolofflorida.com)

## Culture Trip: Tea Party

Alright; it's time for your little ladies and gents to start practicing those newfound manners. Nothing sets the mood like Afternoon Tea. Think "taking tea" is just for girls? Think again! Here are our girl- and boy-approved hot spots to find the hot stuff:



*Note: Reservations recommended at all locations.*

**Peter Rabbit Tea** (Daily, 2 – 4 p.m., \$20): For a traditional-feeling tea with real kid appeal, you can't beat the Ritz-Carlton Grande Lakes." Offering animal-shaped "tea sandwiches" (PB&J and Ham & Cheese), crudités, carrot cake, a rabbit sugar cookie and a chocolate bunny. Adult tea also offered (\$35). [www.grandelakes.com](http://www.grandelakes.com). *Tip: Call ahead to participate in the Ladybug Release at 1 p.m. daily.*

**Halloween Tea Event** (Oct 30, 3 p.m., \$12): In addition to their daily organic Afternoon Tea, Infusion Tea also hosts delightful kid-friendly tea events with a seasonal theme. Don't miss their upcoming Halloween Tea for ages 3 and up. Little goblins will decorate tasty cookies, hear not-so-spooky stories, and enjoy a Halloween-themed Afternoon Tea. [www.infusionorlando.com](http://www.infusionorlando.com) *Tip: Don't forget your Halloween finery. A friendly ghost tells us that prizes will be awarded for best costume.*

**Wonderland Tea Party** (Monday thru Friday 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., \$42): Children 4-12 have tea with Alice and the Mad Hatter at the Grand Floridian. This charming kids-only character experience includes tea, cupcakes, savories, games and an autographed photo. [www.disney.go.com](http://www.disney.go.com). *Tip: There is a maximum of 25 children so every child is guaranteed individual attention.*

**Afternoon Tea at the Peabody Hotel** (Daily, 3 - 4:30 p.m., \$13.95): Come for the Lite Tea, stay for the ducks. The Peabody's famous Mallards march through the hotel lobby at 5 p.m. each day. [www.peabodyorlando.com](http://www.peabodyorlando.com). *Tip: Call in advance and request that your well-mannered darlings assist the Duck Master in leading the ducks on their daily red carpet waddle through the lobby and back to the rooftop Duck Palace.*

## Culture Fix

### Can't Get Enough?

Check out these other etiquette classes:

[www.orlandojcc.org](http://www.orlandojcc.org)  
[www.mimismanners.com](http://www.mimismanners.com)  
[www.southeastetiquette.com](http://www.southeastetiquette.com)

## At Home

Fine china and fine manners aside, the key to a great at-home tea party is a hint of humor. Bust out your best British accent for a bit of witty role-play. "Why yes, Mr. Puddlepot. I'd simply love another biscuit!"

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