

Key Takeaways From
“Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation” by
George Washington

1. Every action done in company, ought to be with some sign of respect, to those that are present
2. When in company, put not your hands to any part of your body, not usually discovered
3. Show nothing to your friend that may affright him
4. In the presence of others sing not to yourself with a humming noise, nor drum with your fingers or feet
5. If you cough, sneeze, sigh, or yawn, do it not loud but privately; and speak not in your yawning, but put your handkerchief or hand before your face and turn aside
6. Sleep not when others speak, sit not when others stand, speak not when you should hold your peace, walk not on when others stop
7. Put not off your clothes in the presence of others, nor go out your chamber half dressed
8. At play and at 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
9. When you sit down, keep your feet firm and even, without putting one on the other or crossing them
10. Shift not yourself in the sight of others nor gnaw your nails
11. 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 mans face with your spittle, by approaching too near him when you speak
12. Kill no vermin as 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
13. Turn not your back especially in speaking, jog not the table or desk on which another reads or writes, lean not upon any one
14. Keep your nails clean and short, also your hands and teeth clean without showing any great concern for them
15. Do not puff up the cheeks, loll not out the tongue, rub the hands, or beard, thrust the lips, or bite them or keep the lips open or too close
16. Be no flatterer, neither play with any that delights not to be played with

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Taken directly out of the book

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17. Read no letters, books, or papers in company, but when there is a necessity for the doing of it you must ask leave: come not near the books or writings of another so as to read them unless desired or give your opinion of them unasked also look not nigh when another is writing a letter
18. Let your countenance be pleasant but in serious matters somewhat grave
19. The gestures of the body must be suited to the discourse you are upon
20. Reproach none of the infirmities of nature, nor delight to put them that have in mind thereof
21. Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another though he were your enemy
22. When you see a crime punished, you may be inwardly pleased; but always show pity to the suffering offender
23. Do not laugh too loud or too much at any public spectacle
24. Superfluous compliments and all affectation of ceremony are to be avoided, yet where due they are not neglected
25. 'Tis ill manners to bid one more eminent than yourself be covered as well as not to do it to whom it's due Likewise he that makes too much haste to Put on his hat does not well, yet he ought to Put it on at the first, or at most the Second time of being asked; now what is herein Spoken, of Qualification in behavior in Saluting, ought also to be observed in taking of Place, and Sitting down for ceremonies without Bounds is troublesome
26. If any one come to Speak to you while you are are Sitting Stand up though he be your Inferior, and when you Present Seats let it be to every one according to his Degree
27. When you meet with one of Greater Quality than yourself, Stop, and retire especially if it be at a Door or any Straight place to give way for him to Pass
28. It is good Manners to prefer them to whom we Speak before ourselves especially if they be above us with whom in no Sort we ought to begin
29. In speaking to men of Quality do not lean nor Look them full in the Face, nor approach too near them at lest Keep a full Pace from them
30. In visiting the Sick, do not Presently play the Physician if you be not Knowing therein
31. Strive not with your Superiors in argument, but always Submit your Judgment to others with Modesty

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32. Undertake not to Teach your equal in the art himself Professes; it Savours of arrogance
33. Mock not nor Jest at any thing of Importance break [n]o Jest that are Sharp Biting and if you Deliver any thing witty and Pleasant abstain from Laughing thereat yourself
34. Run not in the Streets, neither go too slowly nor with Mouth open go not Shaking your Arms kick not the earth with R feet, go not upon the Toes, nor in a Dancing fashion
35. Play not the Peacock, looking everywhere about you, to See if you be well Decked, if your Shoes fit well if your Stockings sit neatly, and Cloths handsomely
36. Associate yourself with Men of good Quality if you Esteem your own Reputation; for 'is better to be alone than in bad Company
37. Never express anything unbecoming, nor Act against the Rules Moral before your inferiors
38. Be not immodest in urging your Friends to Discover a Secret
39. A Man ought not to value himself of his Achievements, or rare Qualities of wit; much less of his riches Virtue or Kindred
40. Break not a Jest where none take pleasure in mirth Laugh not aloud, nor at all without Occasion, deride no mans Misfortune, though there Seem to be Some cause
41. Be not froward but friendly and Courteous; the first to Salute hear and answer & be not Pensive when it's a time to Converse
42. Detract not from others neither be excessive in Commanding
43. Shall be Welcome or not. Give not Advice without being Asked & when desired do it briefly
44. If two contend together take not the part of either unconstrained; and be not obstinate in your own Opinion, in Things indifferent be of the Major Side
45. Reprehend not the imperfections of others for that belongs to Parents Masters and Superiors
46. Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others

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47. Speak not in an unknown Tongue in Company but in your own Language and that as those of Quality do and not as the Vulgar; Sublime matters treat Seriously
48. Think before you Speak pronounce not imperfectly nor bring out your Words too hastily but orderly & distinctly
49. While you are talking, Point not with your Finger at him of Whom you Discourse nor Approach too near him to whom you talk especially to his face
50. Be not Tedious in Discourse or in reading unless you find the Company pleased therewith
51. Be not Curious to Know the Affairs of Others neither approach those that Speak in Private
52. Undertake not what you cannot Perform but be Careful to keep your Promise
53. In Company of these of Higher Quality than yourself Speak not til you are asked a Question then Stand upright put of your Hat & Answer in few words
54. Let thy carriage be such as becomes a Man Grave Settled and attentive to that which is spoken. Contradict not at every turn what others Say
55. Be not tedious in Discourse, make not many Digressions, nor repeat often the Same manner of Discourse
56. Speak not Evil of the absent for it is unjust
57. Make no Show of taking great Delight in your Victuals, Feed not with Greediness; cut your Bread with a Knife, lean not on the Table neither find fault with what you Eat
58. Drink not nor talk with your mouth full; neither gaze about you while you are drinking
59. Rinse not your mouth in the presence of others
60. In the company of your betters, be not longer in eating than they are; lay not your arm but only your hand upon the table
61. Be not angry at the table whatever happens & if you have reason to be so, show it not; put on a cheerful countenance especially if there be strangers, for good humor makes one dish of meat a feast
62. Let your recreations be manful, not sinful