

Courtesy

Syllables
cour•te•sy

Pronunciation
kur-tuh-see

Definition

Polite and well-mannered behavior toward other people.
(Out of **courtesy**, David always referred to adults by their surnames, like Mr. Kron or Dr. Bell.)

Simply put: Being polite.

Related Terms

Obliging: Polite and helpful.

Polite: Using good manners.

Tactful: Saying and doing things with other people's feelings in mind.

Fundamental Question:

Are good manners and polite behavior obsolete?

Students will investigate the idea that showing courtesy and using good manners are ways to show respect for other people.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Research manners and identify trends (or changes) in specific manners over time.
2. Participate in a discussion about the idea that showing courtesy to others never goes out of style.
3. Help develop a manners manual.
4. Plan and participate in a real-life situation in which courtesy is paramount.

Before you begin

- Print out one copy of *An Invitation to Tea* for each student.
- Locate and bring to class several different books about manners (such as Maurice Sendak's *What Do You Say, Dear?*, Sheryl Eberly's *365 Manners Kids Should Know*, and Emily Post's *1922 Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics and at Home*).
- Obtain permission to hold a tea or luncheon for guests in your classroom.
- Find a way to take video and a volunteer willing to record your class.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Courage (Discussion Idea)

Sometimes people are courteous to strangers, but do not treat their friends and family the same way. Have you ever been discourteous to someone close to you? How might you prevent it from happening again?

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Taking It to the Next Level

The Internet Archive is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was founded to give researchers and others a glimpse at historical collections that exist in digital format. Among their truly delightful offerings is *Everyday Courtesy* (produced in 1948 by Coronet Instructional Films and available for viewing at www.archive.org/details/Everyday1948). Watch it with your class and be prepared to answer questions about differences in manners—and life in general—between the middle of the last century and today!

Procedure

1. On the board write: “Little boys are always taught to bow to visitors; little girls to curtsy....If many people are present and the children are not spoken to, they leave the room unobtrusively and quietly. *From Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics and at Home* by Emily Post, 1922.” Have a student read the quotation aloud. Say: “Being polite and showing courtesy to others never goes out of style, but specific manners might change over time.” Discuss this, basing the conversation on the example on the board.
2. Divide the students into “Publication Committees” of three members each. Distribute one or more books about manners to each group and invite the groups to look through them and discuss some of the things they find in the books. Books may be traded back and forth between the groups.
3. Then, ask the groups to organize and write their own books of courtesy and good manners. The books may include things like etiquette online, text messaging dos and don’ts, lunchroom behavior, and so forth. In addition to proper behavior in different social situations, the books must emphasize values and the role courtesy plays in showing respect for others.
4. **Follow up:** If possible, allow the students to plan and carry out a tea or luncheon to which their parents and/or school administrators will be invited. Explain to the children that it will be an opportunity to extend courtesy to others. Begin by distributing the *An Invitation to Tea* sheets. Go over them as a class. Excellent manners and polite behavior should be used as the children make plans, write and send out invitations, seat and serve guests, and so on. Ask a school volunteer to videotape the event. Later, the children may view the tape and critique their own behaviors.

Name _____

Reminder: Courtesy means showing respect.

An Invitation to Tea

Help your teacher and classmates plan a tea or luncheon. Use this sheet for your notes.

What will be the theme of the tea or luncheon? _____

Who will be invited? (example: our parents) _____

When will it take place (date and time)? _____

Where? (example: in our classroom) _____

Show what the invitations will look like. What will they say?

Illustration:

Wording:

Keeping the theme in mind, describe the decorations: _____

What refreshments will be served? _____

Who will do each job?

- Outlining a reasonable budget; organizing fundraising.
- Writing and sending invitations; keeping track of who is coming and who is not.
- Planning the menu. Getting the ingredients. Preparing the food and drinks.
- Organizing party games, activities, or entertainment (optional).
- Making and displaying room decorations.
- Designing table decorations and settings.
- Other jobs as needed.

Consider: What can you and your classmates do to help your guests feel welcome and comfortable? What will you wear? How will you use the occasion to practice courtesy?

Today's Thought: *Courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones which strike deepest in the grateful and appreciating heart.* — **Henry Clay, statesman, orator, and founder of the Whig Party**