

The 1703 Rules of Civility Hawkshead Grammar School

What are we to observe at the Table

If a Person of quality detains you at Dinner, 'tis not civil to wait with him, but by his express Command. If he has no servant by to receive the Towel when his Lordship has wip'd, you must take it from him your self rather than suffer it to continue in his hands to trouble him.

Wait to Be Placed at Table

Whilst Grace is saying, 'tis decent to stand up; when it is said, you are to attend till you be plac'd; or if you will place your self, you must do it (according to the direction of the Gospel) at the lower end of the Table, observing not to put on your Hat, till the whole Company (and especially his Lordship) be cover'd.

Keep Your Sword On

You must not pull off your Sword to sit down at the Table; it is more decent to keep it on. When you are at Table, you must sit upright and not loll upon your Elbows. You must not by any awkward gesture show any signs that you are hungry, nor fix your Eyes upon the Meat, as if you would devour all.

You must not be the first to put your Hand in the Dish, unless you be desir'd to help your Neighbour, or your self. In that Case, you must give the best Piece, and keep the worst for your self; and be sure you touch nothing but with your Fork.

Carving is an Art Form

But of [meat carving] we shall subscribe no Rules: Tis an Art of itself, and Books have been writ of it, with Cuts of the several pieces to shew where you are to stick your Fork (...you must touch nothing upon the Table with your hand, unless it be Bread) where you are to put your Knife, what piece you are to cut first, which is the best, and fittest to be presented to a Person of quality, and the same in Fish and in Fruit.

Drink Wine in Moderation

No Man is to be press'd to drink; for excess of Wine does no body good; some are disorder'd with a little; others are oblig'd to Sobriety by their Characters and Functions, as the Clergy, Magistrates, etc, and to see either of those over-taken, would be a very scandalous sight.

*[Excerpts from Rules of Civility or Maxims of Genteel Behaviour, Chapter XI, Twelfth Edition in French, published in St. Paul's Church Yard, London, 1703.
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