

"This book is the answer to an etiquette vacuum that needed to be filled."
— VANITY FAIR

Beverly Hills
MANNERS

Golden Rules
from the World's
Most
Glamorous
Zip Code

LISA GACHÉ

DARE TO BE POLITE

Beverly Hills
MANNERS

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Glamorous Zip Code*

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For my girls, Sydney and Dylan, who fuel my passion for manners, and for my husband, Brad, who embodies them naturally, every single day.

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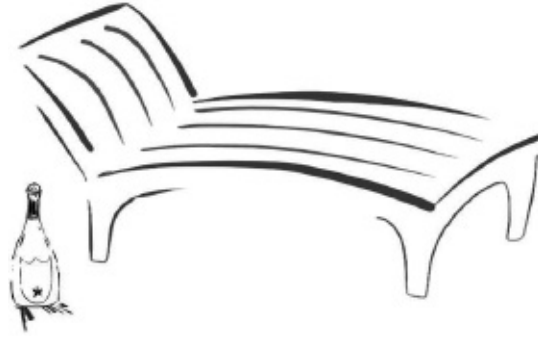
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Introduction Welcome to Beverly Hills

Everyone wants a piece of this town.

The relentless fascination with Beverly Hills didn't begin with *90210* or the now-famous housewives, but recently it's hit critical mass appeal.

I thought it was time someone came clean and revealed how the rich, famous, privileged, and entitled really behave in this little hamlet.

Although I am a native New Yorker, I nevertheless grew up in Beverly Hills, graduated from Beverly Hills High School, and still call it home. So I feel as though I've earned the right to own the subject.

I was raised in a somewhat non-traditional family, split by divorce. I can't say I wasn't privileged in many ways. Although we lived full time in a house on the wrong side of the tracks (in Beverly Hills, that means south of Wilshire Boulevard and east of Doheny—the *slums*) with my mother, my father would whisk my sister and me away on exotic vacations, and sometimes we'd ride in a chauffeur-driven limousine to school. But I was not reared with the good manners I teach today. I don't think I wrote a single thank-you note until I got married.

My two daughters were the impetus for my interest in this subject. I saw etiquette as an important foundation for becoming confident, self-reliant human beings, something I certainly wanted more of as an adult. I picked up this knowledge quite late in life, and it's a constant learning process. I hope this admission makes me, and the manners I'm teaching, more accessible to beginners.

I obtained my first job after college in the entertainment industry, working in music and film. Little did I know this entrée into that unique world would be the perfect foundation for my future work. My first foray as an entrepreneur was starting a concierge service, and I spent my time serving the big personalities in entertainment and the Internet, celebrities and CEOs alike.

My concierge business turned into a baby concierge business (if you've seen the Bravo show *Pregnant in High Heels*, that's it, in essence, sans the storefront and designer maternity line) after the birth of my second daughter. While doing research for my clients, I came across a class called "Petite Protocol" that was held at the Hotel Bel-Air. I called the hotel and had a lengthy discussion with their PR person, who

suggested I scrap the concierge business and focus on forming an etiquette business because she felt it was a field that had not been saturated here in LA and yet was so needed, especially for children.

She connected me to the instructor of the class, etiquette expert Diane Diehl, who had more than twenty-five years of experience in the business and graciously took me under her wing and taught me everything she knew. Two years later, I was ready to open up my own shingle and founded Beverly Hills Manners, with the philosophy of teaching manners in a fun and entertaining way to bring these skills to a wider audience. In January 2009, the *Los Angeles Times* named us the etiquette school that will “teach your kids to be polite.”

Even though I was receiving acknowledgment from the outside and had a wealth of hands-on experience, I felt it was important to have a credential to hang on my wall, so I enrolled in The Protocol School of Washington, the first and only nationally accredited school to meet the high standards set by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) and the US Department of Education. I received a certification as a Corporate Etiquette and International Protocol Consultant. The training provided me with amazing tools, as well as a few secrets I like to keep up my sleeve, which I am reserving purposefully so that even if you read this book cover to cover, you’ll still have a reason to come to Beverly Hills and work with me in person.

Since then, I’ve had a blast dispensing tips on a host of local and national television shows. I’ve advised how to navigate public transit with ease and make a New Year’s Eve toast to Anderson Cooper’s guests, talked air travel perils with Kathie Lee and Hoda (and P.S., there were no formal offerings of alcoholic beverages), sorted through moral compass questions with *The Today Show* hosts, and counseled a loud-mouthed grandma who was making a public nuisance of herself at her grandkids’ Little League games on Dr. Phil.

I receive regular inquiries spanning the continents, from Dubai to Hong Kong to Rio de Janeiro. They want to learn the ins and outs of how we do things here—to be *Americanized*, which is surprising to me, since Americans are renowned throughout the world as rude.

Not a day goes by without me having to dispel the many misperceptions about manners. I hear push back from parents and others who refer to etiquette class as a threat or punishment for bad behavior. Most believe this entire subject matter to be elitist and only for the extremely wealthy. While it’s true that these rules were written for the upper crust, it’s rarely the upper crust that practices them. A thoughtful upbringing can come from any strata of society. However, if you practice good manners, everyone will think you come from money, or the American South—minus an accent, a.k.a. *money*. Southern culture is a microclimate where most people are raised with exemplary manners, and I think southerners have a lot to teach other Americans in this regard. Everyone should have access to this information because it gives us such an advantage in human transactions, from the business world to traveling the world.

That world is changing every day, but the basic guidelines for mutual human respect are not. Whether you’re five or ninety-five, any tools that enable you to feel more

confident, poised, intelligent, communicative, and comfortable are of incredible value.

Welcome to Beverly Hills

Where narcissism is a competitive sport.

In this land of spray tans, designer rip-offs, surgical *enhancements*, and countless other hilarious, vacuous pursuits, the infatuation with celebrity lifestyles is more like a mass stalking. In general, celebrities are not helping. Reality (a word I apply with a second helping of irony) television rules the world now, and the more devastating the train wreck, the better. Why be polite and demure when *outrageous* is so much more tantalizing—and lucrative? A good scandal used to take weeks to unfold; now it's minutes, thanks to unsocial media. Still, the financial return on infamy is colossal, and it better be, because a shack in this zip code will set you back a couple mill. This is what we're exporting to the world: a cargo ship packed with bad manners, in very pretty packages.

And the world is buying it, by the bucket load.

These extremes of behavior are celebrated anywhere you can get WiFi. To battle this pandemic, we need to go back to the source, the fertile crescent of rebellion against even the basic rules of etiquette. And I am referring to Crescent Drive, 90210. Swimming pools, movie stars, a place where a hillbilly can become a millionaire, and billionaires act like hillbillies. Your average hillbilly probably has better manners than most billionaires, and that's where I come in.

I understand the problem. In an age where everyone is rushing, pushing, and shoving to get ahead, each day is a breakneck race to accomplish the long list of ridiculous things we must do to get by. There's little time to address stresses, and apparently no time to stop, take a break, and consider others. The uncertain economy has left most people oscillating between fear and rage. We are all at the breaking point, really, due for a weekend in the rubber room. So, there are those who resort to pharmaceutical solutions to keep themselves from exploding at the insensitive, indifferent, and inappropriate responses that pelt us from every direction. And it's so much worse online, a free-for-all of insults and threats, under the veil of illusionary anonymity. Okay, breathe.

Most people cringe when they hear the words, “manners,” “etiquette,” or “civility.”

But we're living in an extremely social world now, and really, what I teach is social skills. Manners have evolved to become vital navigational tools in this circus of human activity—years ago, a gentleman would walk curbside to protect a lady from the mud splatter from passing horse-and-buggies. That's not as crucial a gesture today (unless you winter back east, where a speeding SUV can spray you with red, salty mud if you're not careful).

***The Golden Rule we teach children is timeless (and yet often ignored online):
Treat others the way you would like to be treated.***

Until we are sealed in our own private bubbles, on a billion separate planets, live human interaction is necessary and for that, you need to be comfortable in your own skin, even in your worst moments. To make a good first impression, you still need a firm handshake and to look people in the eye. A handwritten thank-you note still beats a text. You would never show up to a friend's party without offering to contribute something, or let someone in need of assistance cross a busy street. "Please" and "thank you" still have power. So do "you're welcome" and "excuse me" and "I'm sorry."

Good manners are built on common sense, and common sense always tells you to be the least disruptive object in your environment. Calling attention to yourself can make you a target for predators, and we definitely live in a predatory world. No one needs any unexpected speed bumps to detain us from our insane schedules or bonus chaos to distract us from our profound thoughts. The goal, as ever, is to make your day more pleasant (as well as for those around you).

Good manners will inform the well-being of your relationships. These days toddlers text their parents and teens can skip schoolyard trauma, thanks to online communities. Courtship starts with what we used to call pornography, sexted instantly. But eventually you will find yourself face-to-face. What will you *say*?

Social anxiety comes from anticipating intimidating situations, real or imagined; social grace allows us to *deal* with intimidating situations, if they come up. It also gives us the confidence to interact with anyone, from A-list celebrities to someone threatening you for pocket change.

Once upon a time, etiquette revealed one's social stature. Now it reveals your *character*. Good manners level the playing field—your economic status is no longer an issue. This information can be yours, and it will take you anywhere you want to go.

The grace and sophistication you bring to every aspect of human conduct will do more for you than a shiny new car you can't afford or a million hours torturing yourself at the gym. Despite appearances, even in Beverly Hills, the observations about human interaction developed over centuries through trial and error still hold true. Conducting yourself in a manner that earns respect, rather than forces it, will get you much further than throwing temper tantrums.

Let's make every moment your best moment, shall we?



1

Keeping Up Appearances

You'll need to bring your best self to Beverly Hills. It doesn't matter if you're a hotshot real estate guru, a used Porsche salesman, or a "film producer" (lurking in coffee houses with a laptop, eavesdropping on conversations for ideas). Everyone here is competing for something—a multi-million dollar deal, CEO title, or the perfect, granite-hard gluts—and ambition is a flavor of adrenaline constantly flooding that saturated patch of your brain that governs illusions, delusions, and fantasies of success.

This competition may surface as a heated scramble for a parking space because you're late for a screening, or a war of wits over a minor role in a paper towel commercial to pay next month's rent. You may confront your chief competitor in the tennis club locker room wearing only a tiny towel and suddenly wish you'd spent more time on the elliptical machine—a lot more time.

No Second Chances: First Impressions, Lasting Impact

Let's get the unpleasanties out of the way first.

When you're going about your day, making a skinny double chocolate frappé run or say, getting an aromatherapy pedicure, the new faces you see—your friend Courtney's yoga partner, your agent's new assistant, even (especially) the nice young man who hands you a warm towelette at the salon—each has made a decision about you in approximately the first ten seconds of contact, before a single word has escaped your mouth.

These decisions are based on a package of subtle, but universal codes: your looks, your clothes, and your moves. Call it what you like—mojo, aura, energy, vibe—once that impression sets, it'll take a jackhammer and ten teamsters to dislodge it.

That's animal instinct, and we, as social animals, are always on the prowl for alphas (male or female) in the same way that in this town, you automatically scan a room for

famous faces.

We're all on the hunt for the A-list, and that A stands for Animal Magnetism.

Whether deliberate or otherwise, we are forever trying to discern our place in the larger hierarchy as a means of raising our status.

This is Beverly Hills. This is humanity, really. It's surprising we don't have tails. But we certainly have *claws*.

Fake It Until You Make It

What exactly is star quality? If you have it, you're familiar with the extended stares while strangers try to remember where they've seen you. *Is he on some TV show? Did I read about her in the Vanity Fair Hollywood issue?* Perhaps you do appear on television and in magazines, but it's your perfect balance of positive attitude and social ease that gives people this impression. Who cares if you're gorgeous, successful, or even employed? It's all about how you carry yourself in this world. It's all about the *intangibles*.

Poise, Confidence, Acting Skills

Even if your life is a rollicking shamble, you will show no evidence on your face. No one here wants to know about your wracking self-doubts or your hardscrabble childhood, your failing marriage or your corrosive political opinions. We came here for the sunshine, not the rain. Do your part.

But here's the plain truth, people. We are magnetic, molecular animals, and when others feel your ease, it puts them at ease. Your confident smile lets them know there are no leopards stalking in the tall grass. Or as the case may be, no stalkers in leopard skin boots and a handbag to match.

If you're relaxed among the A-list, even if you're not technically on that list, for all practical purposes, you will be A-list. Even if it's a ruse, enjoy it. That's what this place is all about.

Look the Part (or Someone Else Will Get It)

Whether you're in a generic metropolis or a posh community like Beverly Hills, it's not where you've come from (because half the town is from various places on the globe), it's who you want to be. And that's pretty much up to you. Here in the land of smoke, mirrors, and sketchy real estate deals, we create our own personas for recreation. This should serve as a warning about making snap judgments about people.

That guy handing the valet the keys to his \$800,000 Lamborghini? He wants you to believe he's the prince of some rocky outcropping in the Mediterranean; in fact, he's an Albanian taxi driver spending his lottery money. That lady in ripped jeans stuffing her pony-like mutt into a Prius? Please address her as "Lady," because she's actually British royalty.

Perception beats reality, hands down, every time.

The clothes you choose, your grooming habits, the language you use, the carefree way you go about your day—all of these choices reflect your aspirations. Who cares if you spent your high school afternoons working in the laundry room of a motel in rural Kansas? When you behave like a benevolent heiress, everyone from the breakfast maid to the head of Paramount Pictures will treat you like a benevolent heiress. We call this *grace*.

The more you act like the persona you aspire to be, the more likely reality will follow. In other words, it's your movie. You're the star and you get to cast the love interest and the minor roles, decorate the set, choose the costumes, and call action. In marketing terms, we call this *branding*.

You can turn your life around one hundred and eighty degrees, if you have the pluck and courage. . . .

I had a client who possessed fabulous looks, but arrived in Beverly Hills from a rather humble background. She was a self-confessed “trophy wife,” who married a wealthy man many years her senior. Although it was a happy union, she felt uncomfortable around his often judgmental friends, especially the ones down at the fabulously snotty country club. She pretty much spent her leisure time engaged in vengeance shopping. It took several sessions to build her confidence. I helped spruce up her posture, diction, and conversation skills and upped the level of elegance in her wardrobe. I also recommended she become involved in charitable work to give her life a deeper level of meaning. The outcome? She was ecstatic with her new self.

Wardrobe Malfunction!

Just don't tackle a disguise you can't pull off. There's a difference between good acting and flat-out lying about who you are.

Some of us are natural leaders in the art of crafting a personal brand, effortlessly choosing the clothes and decor and vehicles that become the perfect material projections of our self-image. Others are constantly reinventing their style based on the latest magazine spread they saw. Think you can't buy cool? Would it shock you to find out that the well-dressed woman over in the corner, talking to that gallery owner, pays six different advisors just to choose her shoes?

Nothing should surprise you here—especially the shotgun marriage of identity confusion and limitless resource.

If you go overboard, you'll feel like you're in drag, or worse, wearing a Halloween costume.

If you're not actually a dominatrix, a hip-hop star, or an eighties hair-rocker,

eventually you'll get found out. The more your aspirations are in touch with your own personality and personal tastes, the better you'll move through this town, any town, and across this globe. Whatever your style, own it.

Body Language Needs No Translation App

Look alive! In the animal kingdom, the taller you stand, the less likely a predator will decide you are a snack worth risking a rumble. Imagine this town is a jungle, a jungle swarming with department store salespeople offering you night creams you don't need, hustlers wielding golf clubs, and man-eating divorcées looking for their next meal ticket.

Slouch at your own risk.

Yes, I blather on and on about "good posture." What I mean is this: Don't look small and helpless, like a frightened rabbit. It's the best way to avoid becoming someone's lunch. Walk as tall and straight as you can—if nothing else, you'll look thinner. Relax, it's a lot easier than trying to survive on maple syrup, cayenne pepper, and lemon water (what many Angelenos call "dinner").

Bonus Tip

Posture check! Stand against a wall with your heels touching the baseboard; your back, shoulders, and head should all be in contact with the wallpaper. Ladies: toes and heels together. Men: feet shoulder-width apart—that's the way to appear cool and confident, even if you're not. And it gets easier once you re-train your muscles.

Slow Down the Beat

Don't rush it, don't push it, don't run it over, and don't hurl yourself breathlessly to your next appointment. "Crazy busy" is the standard response to "how are you?" This is a transparent boast, disguised as a complaint. You might think you seem very, very important if you're always in a hurry, but you are communicating the exact opposite. This is a town where keeping others waiting seems to imply status (very wrongly, but that's another chapter).

If you're in a hurry, it means you're late and you *care*, which knocks you back several notches in the business hierarchy. It implies you work for someone else; in short, you're the *help*.

The more slowly you walk, the more power you convey.

Act as though you have leisure time. Your show is on hiatus. You're waiting for your next big deal to seal. You are mulling over the purchase of a sweet French landscape painting or wondering which color of leather will best suit your new Range Rover's

interior.

Slowing things down will also calm you in an intimidating situation, and this town is nothing if not an intimidating situation. Flailing, flustered, and working yourself into a panic increases your chance of making one of those *my God what have I done* errors.

Don't crash around like a delivery truck, unless you are, in fact, a delivery truck.

Ladies, walk lightly and carry a big handbag.

Gentlemen, don't shuffle down the sidewalk. Walk heel toe, heel toe with the weight evenly distributed across your feet. Shoulders down and back, suck in that intestinal tract, and push your collarbone out a bit. Unless this causes muscle tremors, you will appear assured as you walk into lunch at Soho House, alert and engaged—even if you're not. And that's helpful, given the way people run yellow lights here.

Bonus Tip

Calm down. In hectic and challenging circumstances, create an internal metronome on a very slow beat as you go about your maddening day. If it helps, think of a mellow, comfort-ballad in your head (Barry White, John Mayer, Coldplay, or whatever else suits your musical tastes), a gentle rhythm to soothe your soul during particularly trying moments.

How to Land Safely into a Chair

Every time I walk into a restaurant, I see a panorama of diners sunk into their seats like melting cookie dough, their chins almost touching the table. When sitting in the presence of others, make your approach at full height, and as you reach critical proximity, pivot and gently drop. After practice, this will become like flicking the autopilot switch.

Imagine you're a butterfly alighting on a rose petal, not a Boeing 747 crash-landing on a postage stamp.

Once seated, don't lean back and brace yourself with the chair's arms. Instead keep your back straight as a palm tree, your head high, and knees relaxed. And if you don't pay attention to your hands, soon you'll be utilizing them to fidget, play with your hair, feel for blemishes, or pull on your ears.

Ladies, stack your hands like pancakes, one top of the other, right over left. Cross your legs at the ankle, knees glued together. Even if you're sitting behind a desk—it's good practice and an excellent thigh strengthener.

Men, arms extended straight toward your knees. You'll be keeping both feet parallel on the floor, shoulder-width apart at all times, thank you.

Bonus Tip

All hands on deck. Gentlemen, please keep those hands out of your pockets in polite company. That's a convention dating back to the Wild West, when you might be hiding a lethal weapon in your pocket, ready to draw. Nowadays, keeping your hands stashed in your pockets is body language for, "I'm hiding something—hiding the fact that I'd rather be anywhere else!"

Outtake

How to Walk in High Heels

I'm four foot eleven and change—I *live* in heels. Lucky for me, platforms have made a comeback, because the comfort level is so much more sustainable. I even sport platform tennis shoes. Still, this isn't a walk in the park. There will be some discomfort; our job is to minimize that. Teenaged girls are wearing slippers to school, so it's no surprise that they're lining up to learn how to walk in heels for formal events! Here's what you need to know:

- Shoes vary wildly in size, arch, and width. So do your feet.
- The narrower the heel, the harder to balance.
- Don't optimistically overstuff, your reward will be pain.
- Types: Kitten, Wedge, Pump, Platform, Stiletto
 - Kitten heels start at 2.5 inches.
 - Stilettos can be a whopping 7 inches high, most are 4–5 inches.
 - The rest fall somewhere in between.
- Adjust for terrain. The most hazardous is cobblestone, and since half of Beverly Hills pretends it's a Tuscan city circa 1298, I'm on guard at all times. Also watch out for grates, grass, and carpet.
- Be realistic about how long and how far you'll have to walk when you're shopping in your shoe closet before an event.
- Open-toe heels demand regular pedicures.
- Find a good cobbler and up your street advantage by adding rubber dancing soles.
- A shoetree or wads of tissue will help your heels maintain shape between use.
- Feet should be cool and fresh, not hot and icky, when you slip them into \$750 footwear.
- Point your toes when trying on heels and wiggle them to adjust.
- Stand up straight on both feet, holding supporting muscles tight.
- Make your first step with your right foot, land on your heel, and instantly shift weight to the ball of your foot to balance evenly.
- Repeat with your left foot.
- Now walk, heel-toe, heel-toe, like a swan on water, slow and methodical.
- Arms are relaxed by your side, and swinging effortlessly, opposite to your leg movement.
- Your hips should sway naturally and intentionally!