

Kids ask us this question all the time. They think that a bunch of “stuffy old rules” just make it more difficult to enjoy a good meal. We like to tell them that table manners really aren’t just “stuffy old rules” which have no reason behind them. Every table manner in the book is designed to do one of two things: **Avoid grossness.**



Meals are social events. The idea is not only to eat but to enjoy other’s company. If your friend comes to the table with grease from fixing his bicycle chain all over his hands, he chews with his mouth wide open so you can see all his chewed food while you’re trying to eat, and, finally, he coughs all over the table, what do you think? He has missed on at least three manners that would help avoid grossness and by doing so has left you gagging.

Keep us from embarrassing ourselves.

Manners help us know what is expected of us and what we can expect from others. If we know that our bread and butter plate is the one on the left of our table setting, we won’t eat our neighbor’s roll by mistake. If we know to wait until everyone is served or the hostess says to start eating, we are less likely to be the only one half way through our dinner when everyone else says grace.

Table manners help us know how to eat tricky foods, what to do when we need to sneeze, what direction to pass the food, where to put our used napkin and a zillion other things.