

# Etiquette Instruction Opens Doors

By: Keisha Howard

Etiquette...what is Etiquette? Many think that the word "etiquette" sounds stuffy and old fashioned. However, the truth is that etiquette is just another way of showing respect for yourself and for others. In regards to our youth, etiquette instruction can open doors in their future. A recent survey conducted by the Stanford Research Institute and Harvard University found that "85% of our career success depends on our social skills". This study proves that there is truth to the old proverb "Manners will carry you where money will not". Many etiquette experts agree that the study of good manners and respect should start at an early age so that a solid foundation can be set in place as children develop into adults.

Unfortunately, many of our lessons on etiquette are being lost as our busy schedules hinder us from having quality family time together. In the past, manners were usually taught at meal times as the family gathered around the table. However today, we are living in what some call the "McManners Generation". Our schedules are so busy and hectic that manners lessons for our children have become obsolete.

How is this affecting our youth? Today we live in a "survival of the fittest" type of society. Competition is evident in every aspect of life ranging from the school setting to the

professional setting. Our children need to be taught etiquette because in the future, their etiquette will be equated to their competence.

Parents can start at home by using the following tips:

## 1. R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Yes, Aretha Franklin said it best! Respect is a fundamental rule to having good manners. Children should be taught to respect their parents, friends, older adults, family members, and most importantly themselves.

## 2. Table Manners are Totally Cool!

Surprisingly, many children have never been told not to put their elbows on the table, not to reach across someone for the macaroni, and not to lick their knife to clean it. People just assume that children have learned appropriate table etiquette, however, due to our schedules, it is really never being mentioned. Not to say that all children should eat off of fancy china and know all about formal place settings, but children should know that their napkin goes in their lap...not in their shirt like a bib, that one should not begin eating until everyone at the table has been served, and that it is appropriate to cut meat one piece at a time...not all at once. In order to teach manners, a suggestion is to create a game out of manners. Host a "Family Dinner



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Night" once a week where a meal that consist of more than one course is arranged and actual plates and flatware are used, not paper and plastics. Possibly light candles and invite your children to play "dress up" in "formal" clothing. Families can use this time to teach kids how to properly set the table and to influence children to have pleasant conversations at the table.

## 3. Praise your Children!

When your child displays courtesy to someone, praise them for their good behavior towards others. Good manners are a learned behavior and it is always easier to learn something if there is positive reinforcement.

## 4. Lead by Example

The next time that you decide to have a burping contest, or comb your hair at the table, please remember that your children are watching you. Don't expect them to have good manners if you are not displaying good manners yourself.

## 5. Have fun with manners!

Manners lessons do not have to be lectures. They instead can be fun life-skills lessons that children learn and use for the rest of their life.

Manners and Etiquette instruction have become very popular during the past few years. Today, many parents are choosing to invest in their child's future by

enrolling them in a fun children's etiquette class. In Dallas, the Pearl Girls organization is dedicated to providing fun, interactive, and uplifting etiquette, life-skills, and "self-esteem modeling" lessons that socially and professionally give each Pearl Girl a competitive edge for her future. The goal of the program is to plant seeds of social skills, nourished with etiquette, in order to develop the young ladies of today into confident, empowered women of tomorrow. Girls that are involved in the Pearl Girls program learn valuable social skills such as appropriate table etiquette, manners in public places, how to properly introduce yourself and others, conflict resolution methods, personal hygiene tips, personality development, thank you notes and correspondence, "self esteem runway" modeling techniques, and much, much, more! The program promotes girls being proud to be polite, glad to be gracious and loving to be themselves! Each girl involved participates in a "Red Carpet Self Esteem Fashion show" at the completion of the program. Pearl Girls provides etiquette lessons at recreation centers, churches, after school programs, and summer camps throughout the City of Dallas. Private lessons and fun "Etiquette Parties" can also be scheduled. For more information, please call (972) 795-5577 or visit [www.ourpearlgirls.org](http://www.ourpearlgirls.org).