

# Manners Matter

Activity Guide  
Ages 9 to 12

## Share Your Space

### The Right Foot

Can you imagine what it would be like if all the drivers on the road went in whichever direction they wished? There are laws for which side of the road to travel on and which lanes to ride in. Following these rules keeps people safe; breaking them can lead to a traffic ticket or worse: a crash. There also are rules for traveling safely and politely on foot, on a bike, or on another self-powered vehicle like a skateboard. It keeps everyone happy and safe.



### Civil Action

People moving in a single direction generally walk on the outside right. That's a convenient and easy rule to remember. But what other things should you consider when you are around other people? The most important thing to remember when you're in public is to respect another person's space. There's a zone or an indefinable amount of open space that a person

### Life Skill

- Social skills

### Project Skill

- Public etiquette

### Objective

- Participant shares space with others.

### Success Indicators

- Participant knows how "traffic" flows and behaves courteously in public.

### Eti-Kit

- Notebook
- Pen

### Courtesy Corner

- The first known book on etiquette, *Instructions of Ptahhotep*, was written in Egypt about 2500 B.C. Penned by the pharaoh's top official, it outlined principles of considerate human relations.

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likes to have around himself or herself. But it varies, depending on the situation. Obviously, people walking in a park will have more space to themselves than someone standing in line for an event—or even sitting or standing in an audience at an event.

For a week, keep a log or list of all the places you go to where public interaction happens. Make at least one trip to a crowded place like a mall or theater. Before you go, make a Top 10 list of the rules you think are most important when being in a public place. When you return from the crowded place, re-evaluate your list. Did you make changes based on what you observed?

Here are a few basic rules of public space etiquette:

- Ride your bike, scooter, or skateboard only in designated places.
- You can intrude into someone's personal space in ways other than bodily. Talking loudly or yelling at inappropriate times also can be rude.
- The formation of lines is based on a first-come, first-served principle. You should respect another person's place in line.
- There is hardly ever an excuse to get closer than 18 inches to a stranger in public.
- Single file is the most orderly way to walk or ride. If no one else is around, you and your friends can gather in bunches. Don't block paths, aisles, hallways, or walkways.
- If you bump into someone, or vice versa, there's no need to get upset. Everyone is clumsy or inattentive at one time or another. Say "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry." If someone bumps into you, be gracious and understanding.
- Remove your trash from movie theaters, fast food restaurants, or picnic areas.
- You've probably heard that it's rude to stare. It is. Brief eye contact and a smile, however, are almost always appropriate and welcome.



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- If you get to a door first, always hold it open or keep it from shutting on the person behind you.

## Extra Polish

Design a game you and your friends can play to demonstrate what you learned about public space. “Mother, May I” is one game you can change and use. For example, each player will ask the leader whether he or she is permitted to do something appropriate or inappropriate. See if you can “stump” the leader by thinking of challenging questions.

## Finishing School

### Share

- How do you feel when people stand too close to you?
- What’s the hardest part about sharing space with others?
- What different kinds of good and bad behavior did you witness during the week?

### Process

- How do you know for sure how close to stand to someone? How can you find out?
- When someone is impolite to you in public, how should you respond?
- Explain what this means: “Good manners are caught, not taught.”

### Generalize

- What ways do you have of respecting people’s personal space each day?

### Apply

- How can you use what you learned in this activity to be a better public citizen?