

**TAKE
A SIDE**

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts.

Decide what you think. Go to

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Do Manners Matter?

Experts say we're turning into a bunch of slobs. Should we care?



nothing new, 69 percent of American adults surveyed in 2010 said they think Americans are getting ruder. What is going on?

A Code of Behavior

According to experts, impolite behavior is worse than annoying; it's threatening our civilized way of life. Think about how many fights are caused by rudeness: brawls that break out when people cut in line, or road rage that erupts when one driver cuts off another. "Good manners are a code of behavior for how we treat one another," says P. M. Forni, a Johns Hopkins University professor who is a politeness expert.

A few years ago, shoppers at a New York Walmart took rudeness to a new—and extreme—level. Minutes before the store was scheduled to open for a pre-Christmas sale, a crowd smashed the store's glass doors and charged inside. Many were hurt. One man was killed. No one stopped to help.

Of course, most rudeness doesn't result in death and destruction. But the Walmart stampede is an example of what can happen when people fail to show consideration for others.

Who Cares?

Manners might not seem like a big deal, especially when you consider all the serious problems facing the world, like war, poverty,

A major crisis is threatening America. And no, we're not talking about global warming or Bieber fever.

The problem is that Americans have become extremely—even dangerously—RUDE.

The evidence is everywhere, from the guy chatting on his cell phone in the middle of *Wreck-It Ralph* to your best friend never thanking you for the awesome birthday gift you gave her. And though obnoxious behavior is

and disease. You have a lot in your own life to worry about too—school, sports, pressures from friends and family. Does it really matter if you forget to say “please” or “thank you”?

Besides, our society has become more casual. We send text messages instead of handwritten letters. We say “no problem” instead of “you’re welcome.” It’s not that people don’t care about each other; it’s just that the way we act is less formal than in the past.

Plenty of Americans, however, are fighting to keep formal manners alive. At etiquette schools around the country, you can learn the difference between a salad fork and a dinner fork (the salad fork is smaller) and how to behave in front of the Queen of England.

Ultimately, though, knowing which fork to use isn’t as important as paying attention to those around you. Perhaps that girl at the mall didn’t realize her headphones were giving off an earsplitting whine for everyone to hear; she was just grooving to Carly Rae Jepsen. In other words, most rudeness isn’t on purpose.

Still, you might feel dorky as the one person who holds the door for others or refuses to start eating until everyone is served. But don’t worry. Studies show that kids with good manners are more likely to be successful: They get higher grades in school and impress people more.

Even better? Your good manners will make the world a happier, safer, and more peaceful place. ■

**WHAT
DO YOU
THINK?**

Should we care about manners?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side.
Write the information on the lines below.

YES Please and thank you!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

NO Lighten up and chillax!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. It can become the thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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ACTIVITY
SHEET
ONLINE!**