

I'M NO EMILY POST. I applaud Casual Friday expanding to fill the workweek, enjoy no longer feeling social pressure to ponder my silverware placement, and fully appreciate a woman's right to wear slacks on all occasions; but enough is enough. Lack of tech-etiquette breeds anarchy, and since Ms. Post never sent an email, answered a cell phone, or tweeted her posse, someone needs to step in. Basic etiquette cannot be allowed to disappear like files in a hard drive crash. Reluctantly, and humbly, I will attempt to address the most egregious contemporary faux pas in her stead:

**Cell Phone Usage & Texting:** Cell phones are a sci-fi dream come true, but just because you *can* talk to anyone, anywhere, anytime doesn't mean you *should*. Do you really need to converse on the phone while driving, grocery shopping, in a movie theater, or when having lunch with actual, physically-present company? After all, *Star Trek's* Captain Kirk didn't answer his tri-corder with: "Hi, Bones, where are you? At lunch...? Yeah. Yeah. No. Nothing. What's up with you...?" Answering such calls is rude to the people present, and, sorry folks, texting, like a silent fart, stinks too. In essence, you are saying to those present, "This phone call, or text message, which is most likely about nothing, is more important than you." The world will survive if you wait until you've actually finished your lunch to tweet everyone that you had lunch.

Making a phone call and/or texting while driving is not rude, it is extremely dangerous (and in many states now, thankfully, illegal.) Let this sink in: your idle chat could kill someone. Taking or making phone calls while in theaters, churches, or during any public performance should warrant the death penalty. A friend of mine, to prove a point, has begun inserting his own dialog into any overheard public cell phone conversations, figuring that if he can *hear* what's being discussed, then it qualifies as *public* conversation. I applaud his logic and encourage *everyone* to adopt this practice.

**Group Emails:** The ease with which a group email can disseminate information is laudable, and when used for such things as broadcasting address changes or important announcement, it serves its purpose. But being on someone's group email list for funny links, YouTubes, chain-mail nonsense, political action pleas, things containing large attachments, or generally useless snarkings, relegates that sender to cyber-hell, AKA my spam filter. An equally annoying corollary to the group email is your own witty response sent via the "reply all" button. You assume I care about your "LOL" or "IMHO" and frankly, you assume far too much. You are a Bandwidth Bandit, IMHO. LOL.

A last thought regarding emails: it is argued that emails are not letters, and therefore do not require the receiver to reply. This is a lame excuse for sloth. The email is a valid form of written communication, and, in case you haven't noticed, has usurped snail-mail, so any personally addressed email requires acknowledgement and response. Anyone who neglects responding is rude, and anyone operating a business or service neglecting to respond to a query is unprofessional. Literary agents, please take particular notice.

**Blog Decorum:** I have yet to understand the need to make one's personal diary public. Most teenage girls of my era

hid theirs under their mattresses and had the kind that would only open with a key. Now, it seems, there is a desire to Twit (an apt term if ever there was one) every little, boring bit of one's life to the entire world. To each his own, and I still have the choice to log off, but there should be certain considerations taken when one is addressing the entire world. Trashing someone else in a private diary may serve a valid therapeutic need, but to do so in front of the entire world is defamation of character, so wise up. And, like a game of Telephone, rumors spread, change, and grow, and on the web, everything has the potential to go viral, so think, think, *think* before you post your poisoned darts.

Likewise, to those who comment on others' blogs: keep in mind that, even though you may possess an avatar and/or pseudonym, some real person is on the receiving end of your flaming, so have a heart. If you are prone to habitual flame wars, you might want to examine your own psychology, and if you have more of a tendency toward verbal violence on the internet than you would otherwise express in real life, seek therapy. In short, put a smile in your snark.

I realize this call for exercising etiquette in a digital age is tilting at wind generators, but I urge all those reading this to remember one great truth: you have power over yourself. You can change your own behavior, you can educate by example, you can refuse to become the thing you hate, and maybe, just maybe, our new tech-etiquette can go viral too.



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