

ABCs of P.E.O. Etiquette

During the 1600-1700s, nobles who lived at the French royal court developed elaborate social customs, mostly to avoid becoming bored. The nobles drew up a list of proper social behavior and called it “etiquette.” This word came from an old French word meaning ticket (of admission). Louis XIV’s master gardener at the Garden of Versailles, annoyed at noblemen tramping across his pristine lawns, posted “etiquettes” with the admonition to “keep off the grass.” When the nobles ignored the etiquettes, the gardener complained to the king. King Louis XIV promptly issued an edict that commanded everyone to “keep within the etiquettes.” Thus, the term etiquette, meant to convey a specific and strict code of conduct, came into being.

Etiquette is a code of behavior that helps people to get along with each other. Many people think of etiquette as a list of rigid rules for certain events like weddings or a formal dinner, but etiquette includes more than strict rules. Etiquette simply means good manners. Its most important function is to provide general guidelines for courteous, considerate behavior in all of our relationships with others in everyday life.

Good manners, like good taste, derive from sensibility and common sense. Manners give us guidelines about the “how, what, where, when and why” in social graces. If learning about manners and etiquette make us feel secure in our movements, if it prevents us from feeling awkward or doing something silly, then it has great value. Etiquette is being people conscious - being aware of how nice it feels to be considerate of those with whom we interact. It is urgent that rather than “I and me,” we think about “you and they and us.” The entire philosophy of etiquette can easily be summarized by the Golden Rule: “Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.”

Let’s use the alphabet to review P.E.O. etiquette and courtesy.

A – ACTIVE

Being a member and wearing our star
makes you a P.E.O. in name –
Only by becoming **active**
can you appreciate
our Objects and Aims.

Accept new challenges
whenever they ensue –
But, the first responsibility
expected of you –

Is to attend all meetings
so you’ll comprehend and know
the full import of P.E.O.

B – BE ON TIME

P.E.O. is a previous date –
Attend to the time,
please don't be late.

Let's keep the meeting orderly –
Don't make your sisters wait.

C – CLOSING

Stand, at the **close** of the meeting
when the gavel tap is given.
For the benediction, your head is **bowed** –
For the closing statement, **risen**.

D – DEVOTIONS

As the chaplain conducts devotions
we stay seated in our chair.
With “**let us pray**” –
Our heads are bowed
while she reads the chaplain's prayer.

This moment of devotion
is reverently closed
with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.
And let it be known –

From the version of King James –
Remember “**debts and debtors**” –
And, although it means the same,
not trespasses and trespassers!

E – EMBLEM

Our P.E.O. emblem
a tiny work of art –
Is worn on the left side
always above the heart.

It's worn to every meeting,
and when other occasions rule,
on a dress or suit jacket,
above all other emblematic jewels.

It is the property of our sisterhood
lent to members who are active –
But returned to the president
if one becomes inactive.

The chapter should be apprised
of the emblem's final disposition –
for with a sister, it may be buried
or returned to our organization.

F – FIRST NAMES

We were all taught to respect our elders
and call them Miss or Mrs.
But in P.E.O., we use **first** names
because we all are sisters.

G – GAVEL

(the opening three taps of the gavel)

On the **first** tap, the president
calls the meeting to order
and announces any officers pro-tem.

All rise on the **second** tap of the gavel.
And on the **third** –
the guard proceeds ahead.

H – HISTORY

We honor the seven Founders
in a personal way.
Make it **your** responsibility
to attend Founders' Day.

I – INVITATION

Extended by request
is a membership invitation –
By the **entire** local chapter
without any reservation.

J – JOINING
(versus becoming)

P.E.O. is a **privilege** –
it is not a club to join.
We take our vows seriously –
Our virtues keep us going.

As we strive for high ideals –
and as every sister knows,
Only through love and loyalty
do we **become** P.E.O.s.

K – KNOWLEDGE

With knowledge comes wisdom,
so please be apprised –
That with **non-members**
discussion of **private** P.E.O. matters
is never advised.

L – LOVING CONCERN

Have loving concern for each sister
and when the situation deems –
It is the **charge** of every member
to attend to her sister in need.

M – MEETINGS

Be mindful of your own attendance –
a **previous** engagement is P.E.O.
The business meeting procedures
stay the same wherever you go.

N – NEW MEMBERS

If you sponsored a member,
your **first** obligation
is to acquaint our new sister
with our rules and traditions.

Take her under your wing,
her mentor be –
Don't expect her to grasp
immediately –

What it's taken us years
to digest and know.
She needs guidance and direction
to help her grow.

O – OBJECTS & AIMS

Think about the Objects and Aims –
They are not just words to recite.
Make them your personal guideposts –
A foundation for the principles of life.

P – PASSWORD

Be aware if you come in late,
your entrance at the door will be barred –
Until you give the password,
“not above a whisper” to the guard.

Q – QUIET

When the meeting is called to order,
cease all neighborly conversations –
So the president can chair the meeting
in an orderly, businesslike fashion.

R – ROLL CALL

When the treasurer calls the roll
don't answer “here” or “aye.”
Using P.E.O. decorum,
“**present**” is the correct reply.

S – STAND

Protocol says
when you address the chair –
Stand and be recognized
before speaking loud and clear.

Whether a committee report,
or a topic of discussion –
Follow Robert's Rule of Order
where standing is the custom.

T – TIMELESS TRADITION

It has been said that in the vocabulary
of a P.E.O.
You never (well, almost never)
hear the word **NO**.

U – UNABLE (to attend a meeting)

Unable to attend a meeting –
Unto other hostesses do,
according to the Golden Rule,
as you would have them do to you.

The hostess, to her home has issued
a welcoming invitation –
Call ahead, if you can't attend –
It's not only your manners – but also **your obligation!**

V – VOTE

When business deems action
and you are given a choice –
Remember it's pro or con
whether voting by ballot or voice.

W – WELL ACQUAINTED

When a name is presented for membership –
be your own counsel
and before you sign –
Know that **with** the candidate
you are **well** acquainted –
Before putting your name on the line.

X – EXEMPLIFICATION

The exemplification of the ritual
is an occasion for us all –
To renew and review the lessons
taught silently by our star.

Y – YEARBOOK

If you can't be a hostess,
be a co-hostess or give a program –
It's only fair.
The yearbook committee's job will be easier
if **everyone** does her share.

Z – ZEST

As we go through life
we are often told
we reap what we sow.
It's just the same in P.E.O.

Your spirit and your zest
and the joy that you possess –
Can only help you **grow**
into a **loving** P.E.O.!

We've gone through the alphabet
from A to Z –
Reviewing P.E.O. etiquette
and courtesy.

Your sisters will cover for you
if you mess up your part –
So now go in peace
with joy in your heart.