



# George Washington's Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation

*Ryland Peters & Small*

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## **George Washington's Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation** Ryland Peters & Small

These ancient rules of civility begin with the instruction that "every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present" and ends with "labour to keep alive in your breast that little celestial spark called conscience." In between is a wealth of advice on how to avoid offending one's superiors, peacefully live among equals, and show respect to subordinates. We can all gain from imitating George Washington, whose ideas of dignity and respect for his common man began with these rules and were followed diligently throughout his life, ultimately shaping both his outward behaviour and his nation. George Washington is thought to have been around 14 years old when he copied 110 rules of civility and decency into his study book. The origin of the rules can be traced back to a longer book on etiquette written by French Jesuit scholars; eight-year-old Francis Hawkins translated the work into English in around 1640. The selected rules were written by George Washington, alongside poems which also provide an insight into his boyhood musings, in one of two study books now held in the Library of Congress. \*One of the earliest recorded examples of writing by George Washington. \*Both an essential historical document and a tried and tested book of manners that is still relevant today. \*An ideal gift packed with advice for a variety of social situations.

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