



## Miss Manners' Basic Training: The Right Thing to Say

By Judith Martin

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### Miss Manners' Basic Training: The Right Thing to Say By Judith Martin

Miss Manners hereby declares that "*You look terrific -- did you have a facelift?*" is not an acceptable compliment. For this and the other myriad rudeness that nowadays pass for consolation, congratulation and other forms of verbal communication, Miss Manners provides politely pointed comebacks, as well as the gracious and proper thing to say in any situation.

Miss Manners feels compelled to do so because saying the wrong thing -- whether in the name of originality, self-expression, honesty or instant empathy -- has become all too common:

To a Bereaved Person:

*"You must realize it's all for the best."*

To a Newly Engaged Person:

*"Are you sure you know what you're doing?"*

To a Pregnant Woman:

*"You can still do something about it, you know."*

**The Right Thing to Say** is a refresher course in etiquette as a second language, filled with the practical advice and sly humor that make Miss Manners such "good wicked fun, and helpful too" (*Cosmopolitan*). Including useful phrases for dealing with life's special occasions and mishaps, **The Right Thing to Say** explores the subtleties of saying "no," conducting a conversation without causing offense and the art of the apology when you do anyway.

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## Miss Manners' Basic Training: The Right Thing to Say By Judith Martin Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #698173 in Books
- Published on: 1998-04-20
- Released on: 1998-04-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .73" w x 5.41" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 192 pages



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### Editorial Review

#### From Library Journal

Martin points out that "polite conventions have been ignored so long that even kindly disposed people no longer know what they are." Never fear. Martin, a.k.a. Miss Manners, is on hand to supply the appropriate comments for every situation. The art of the polite nuance?how to say "none of your business" or "quit bullying me" with grace?would be lost if it were not for this delightful author's tenth book. Viva Miss Manners! Highly recommended for public libraries.

-?Susan B. Hagloch, *Tuscarawas Cty. P.L., New Philadelphia, Ohio*

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#### From Booklist

The conceit of "basic training" --Martin has previously put out books on eating and electronic communication under that boot-camp heading--indicates how far she believes manners have fallen. The culpable trend in conversational manners, her topic here, is the tendency for the etiquette-challenged to emote, to be honest, to be original. Where once one answered the pleasantries, "How are you?" with, "Fine, thank-you," modern custom threatens the inquirer with a soul-baring soliloquy on the interrogatee's exact state of mind. Miss Manners deplores this. She prefers euphemism and conventional phrases, and in this, as in her previous books, she issues rulings in response to letters she receives. The gaffes and embarrassments her correspondents record are entirely avoidable, Miss Manners assures them, if only they would keep a few rules in mind: say every baby is beautiful, confine commiseration to an "I'm so sorry," say no nicely, and don't talk about politics, religion, and grandmother's failing health. Like an interpreter in a foreign country, she even provides the phrase book, in the form of boldface replies to conceal the bold-faced lies that we need in order to extricate ourselves from potential crises. To a friend who is marrying an unsuitable partner, "Congratulations," not "Don't do it!" is the right thing to say. Martin is an amusingly sardonic arbiter, and her manual should be popular. *Gilbert Taylor*

#### From Kirkus Reviews

In the second entry in her ``Basic Training'' series, Miss Manners, with her usual wit and graciousness, instructs us in how to respond to awkward, embarrassing, or just downright rude comments from others. Indeed, Miss Manners enlightens us as to just how rude we, as a society have become, expressing our opinions where they aren't wanted, in the name of ``honesty''; asking intrusive questions of new acquaintances on the premise that intimacy can be immediate. Miss Manners encourages tried-and-true pleasantries such as discussing the weather when small talk is called for, and she offers a polite but pointed response for every rude occasion. What do you say, after all, when a friend suggests your engagement to be married might not be wise? (Innocently reply, ``Oh, I knew you'd be happy for me.'') How does a lawyer respond when someone pointedly tells a rude lawyer joke? (Innocently ask, ``Oh? Was that a joke?'') As always, Miss Manners provides what one ``gentle reader'' calls her ``polite, succinct and effective rejoinders.'' -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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**Millicent Doty:**

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