

50 THINGS

EVERY

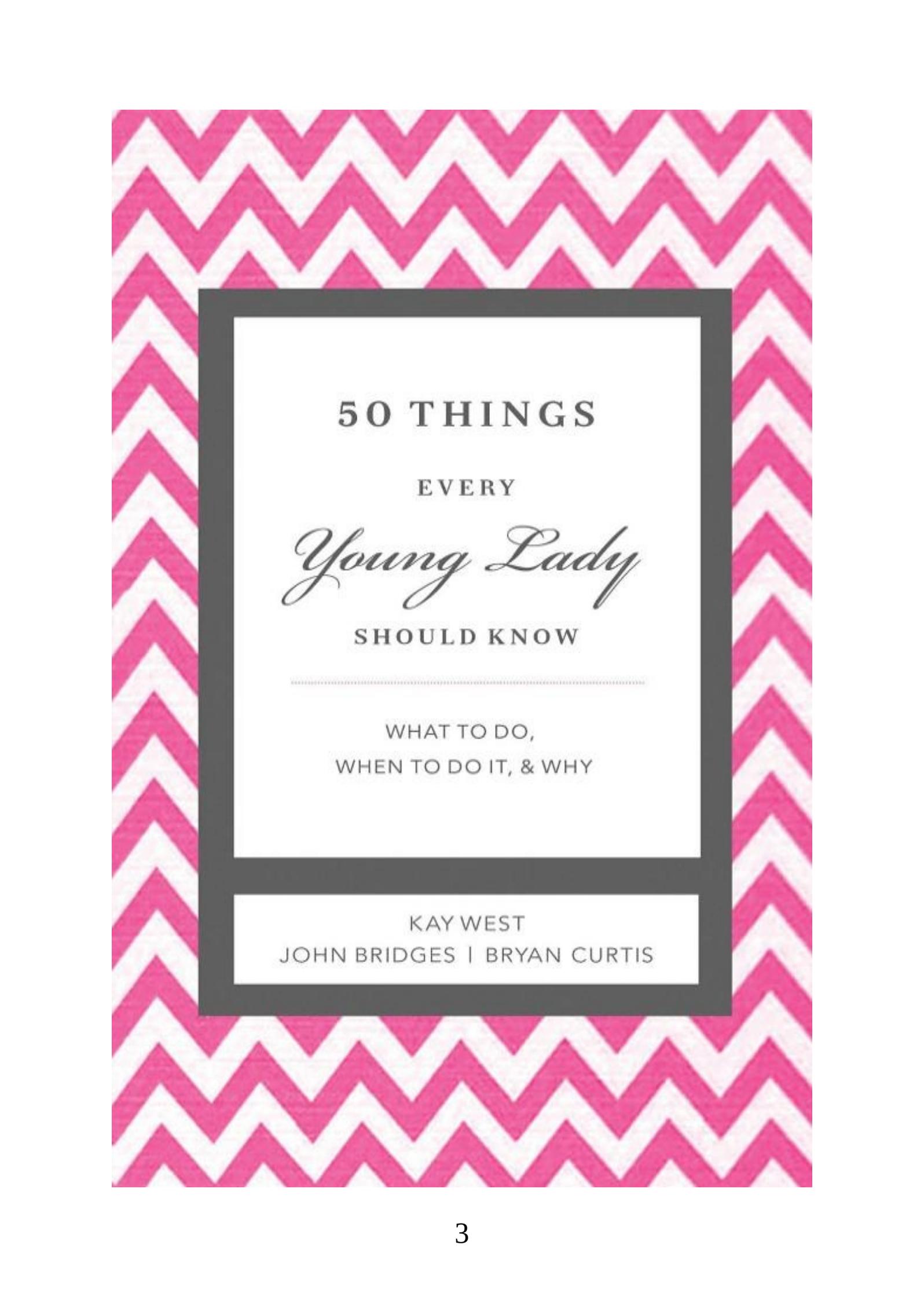
Young Lady

SHOULD KNOW

WHAT TO DO,
WHEN TO DO IT, & WHY

KAY WEST

JOHN BRIDGES | BRYAN CURTIS



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**50 THINGS
EVERY
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SHOULD KNOW**

WHAT TO DO,
WHAT TO SAY,
AND HOW TO BEHAVE

KAY WEST
with JOHN BRIDGES
and BRYAN CURTIS



NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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*To my mother,
Joyce Karlson Shaw,
who laid the foundation, and to her
sister
Donalyn Karlson Morris,
who let me tag along
—K.W.*

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INTRODUCTION

It's safe to say that young women in the 21st century are exposed to more educational opportunities than any generation of women in history. Even before you started kindergarten you might have been on a soccer team, in a dance class, or taking Suzuki violin lessons. At home you might have played word games on the computer and practiced writing your name. By the time you get to middle school, you might feel as if there aren't enough hours in the week to do everything on your calendar.

But sometimes what gets lost in between ballet and biology, Spanish class and piano lessons, creative writing and cross country, are the basic rules of simple etiquette and guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Years and years ago, young ladies were expected to take classes in proper deportment, which is an old-fashioned way of saying simple etiquette and appropriate behavior. That was long before young women spent their teen years preparing for higher education, interesting work, and being financially independent.

Progress is a good thing, and no one would ever for a second suggest going backwards. But even an accomplished student, a gifted artist, or a brilliant young law clerk is at a disadvantage if she never learned to write a thank-you note, understand a formal table setting, accept a compliment, make an apology, express sympathy, or respond to an invitation.

Learning these things will not cost you a cent, but knowing them and practicing them will without a shadow of a doubt pay enormous dividends, starting right now and lasting your lifetime.

The good news—for you and your parents—is that you don't have to add one more class to your overwhelming schedule. Within the pages of this book are small but very important lessons every young lady should know, whatever her dreams for her future may be.

1

Chapter 1

SAYING “PLEASE”

What was your first word? Your mother will probably tell you it was *Mama*. Your father will insist it was *Dada*. Your grandmother might even believe with all her heart that it was *Nana*. But *you* have no recollection. Chances are, though, that somewhere between *Mama*, *Dada*, and *Nana*, and before your first complete sentence, you learned the word *please*.

Your mother may have squatted down beside you, cookie in hand and said, “*Please*. I want a cookie, *please*,” intending for you to repeat it back to her before rewarding you with the treat. Your dad may have sat down with you on the floor, ball in hand, and said, “*Please* play ball” before rolling it across the carpet to you. You also probably heard your parents use it with each other—“May I please have the paper when you’re done with it?” “Will you please take the trash out?”— and saw the positive results.

2

Along with *mama*, *daddy*, *ball*, and *cookie*, *please* is one of the most important words you learn when you begin talking. It’s hard to turn down someone who prefaces or ends a request with the word *please*. It doesn’t matter if you are two years old and asking for a lollipop; eight years old and asking for a new backpack to replace the baby one from first grade; twelve years old and asking for money for a movie; fourteen and asking for a ride to the mall; or seventeen and asking a teacher to write a letter of recommendation for your college application. *Please* is a word that if you are smart—and considerate, which is just as important as being smart— you will use for the rest of your life.

YOU DO

Say “please” consistently, to everyone, always. It doesn’t matter if you’re asking your brother to “pass the potatoes, please,” or asking the busy clerk in the store to please wrap your purchase for your mother’s birthday gift.

YOU DON’T

Treat your little brother, however annoying he may be, with any less consideration than you do a stranger. And vice versa.

Why

Because *please* really is a magic word that adds a layer of pleasantry to every request. The more you use it, the more natural it becomes to you.

3

A lady says the word *please* every time she makes a request, no matter how small it seems.



A lady answers, “Yes, please,” if someone asks if she would like something. If not, she says, “No, thank you.”



A lady knows “please” is just enough. Saying “pretty please” or “pleeeeeeease” is unnecessary and can be annoying.

Chapter 2

SAYING “THANK YOU”

Has this ever happened to you? Your mother comes into your room while you are doing homework, lays your clean, folded laundry on your bed, stands by your desk for about ten seconds, then says, “You’re welcome!” before she stomps out the door. Or your dad drops you off at your friend’s house and as the car door is closing behind you, he shouts, “You’re welcome!” This is not the time to roll your eyes; consider what you have *not* done that has irritated your mom or dad.

You might have “thank you” down pat when someone gives you something you’ve already asked for, but having good manners also means saying “thank you” after people do something nice when you haven’t asked, or just out of the blue.

5

When your mom puts your clean laundry on your bed, when your dad gives you a ride, when your friend tells you how cute your outfit is, or her mom tells you after the soccer match what a great game you had, the response is as simple as “1,2, thank you.”

YOU DO

Say “thank you” anytime someone does something nice for you, no matter how well you know them.

YOU DON’T

Think you don’t have to say “thank you” to your mom, your dad, or your big sister because they are family and don’t count.

Why

Because family is where good manners begin, not where they end.

YOU DO

Say “thank you” when a teacher compliments your drawing, or the piano teacher remarks kindly on your playing, even if you’re not happy with your drawing or your performance.

6

YOU DON’T

Reply “it’s ugly!” or “I was terrible!” even if you feel you could have done better.

Why

Because rejecting someone’s kind comments on your accomplishment implies they have no taste, and that’s insulting.

YOU DO

Say “thank you” to the person who just made your strawberry-banana smoothie, handed you your change at the market, or gave you a program at the hockey game.

YOU DON’T

Assume that because people are “doing their jobs” they don’t deserve to be thanked for that particular interaction with you.

Why

Because it makes people feel good to know their efforts are appreciated, and why wouldn’t you want to make someone feel good?

7

A lady smiles and makes eye contact
when she says “thank you.”



A lady says “thank you” even when the
person she is thanking is on the other
end of the phone.



A lady says “thank you” even if no one
else has—or *especially* if no one else
has done so.

Chapter 3

SAYING “EXCUSE ME”

When it comes to the vocabulary of good manners, no phrase is more multifunctional or comes in handier than “excuse me.”

You say “please” when asking for something and “thank you” when someone has done something for you or given you something nice. But “excuse me” has nearly as many uses as a Swiss Army pocketknife. It can be used as a request, as an attention getter, or as a type of apology when an apology isn’t really necessary but not saying anything would be rude.

If you’re walking down a crowded hall at school and happen to accidentally bump into someone, you say “excuse me.”

If the only two remaining seats together at the movie theater are smack in the middle of the aisle, as you and your friend squeeze past each person, you should quietly say “excuse me.” If you happen to step on the foot of someone who hasn’t had the good sense to tuck it under his or her chair, you should add “I’m sorry.”

9

If a group of people are chatting with one another and blocking a doorway you need to go through, you don’t have to wait for them to move on; just say “excuse me” politely but loudly enough so they can hear you, and they’ll let you right through.

If someone has spoken to you and you couldn’t hear the entire sentence, you say “excuse me?” as a question, and they’ll gladly repeat what they said.

In general, girls are far more careful than boys about belching at the table, but it happens, and when it does, there is no need to act as if it didn’t. A simple “excuse me” is sufficient.

YOU DO

Say “excuse me” if you have to walk through the middle of a line of people at the concession stand.

YOU DON'T

Scoot through when you see an opening as if no one will notice.

Why

People waiting in line can be very protective of their spots but will be happy to step back if they know your intention is not to butt in.

10

YOU DO

Say “excuse me?” if you haven’t heard what someone has said to you and would like them to repeat it.

YOU DON'T

Say “huh?”

Why

“Huh” sounds as if you are grunting, and young ladies don’t grunt unless they are moving heavy objects or involved in an athletic endeavor.

YOU DO

Say “excuse me” if you need to interrupt someone, even if it’s your own mom on the computer or your dad reading a book.

YOU DON'T

Fidget, wave your arms around, or sigh dramatically.

Why

Because saying “excuse me” is a perfectly acceptable way to get someone’s attention.

11

A lady always says “excuse me” to get someone’s attention, not “hey” or “um.”



A lady says “excuse me” when passing in front of someone’s line of vision, whether that’s in front of the lipstick display at the pharmacy or a painting in a museum.

Chapter 4

BEING INTRODUCED

There's a reason that something is repeated over and over again, until it becomes one of those things that parents call "an old saying." It's because it has been tested by time and proven to be true. "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." "Don't count your chickens before they hatch." "The early bird gets the worm."

When your parents start a conversation with "There's an old saying . . .," you should resist sighing loudly and instead listen to what they have to say, especially this: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

First impressions count, which is why the way you respond when being introduced to someone, especially an older someone, is very important.

Let's say your mother has dropped you off at your father's office so he can take you to soccer practice. You are reading a magazine while you wait for him to pack up his briefcase. His boss walks into his office, and your father says, "Diana, this is my daughter Evelyn. Evelyn, this is Ms. Reid."

13

If you remain seated in your chair, barely look up over the top of the magazine, and mumble, "Hello" or even worse, "Hey," your father's boss will forever remember you as the rude young woman who didn't know the first thing about respect for older people.

When you are introduced to another person, the right thing to do is to look at the person and say, "It's nice to meet you Sam/Tressa/Mrs. Brooks/Mr. Tate/Reverend Stevens/Dr. Mayer." If the person you are being introduced to is your age, and it seems appropriate to shake hands, you can do so. If the person you are being introduced to is an adult, you wait for that person to extend their hand first, and if they do, offer a firm handshake, though not a tight grip.

If your father's boss walks into his office while you are reading a magazine, the first thing you do, even before your father gets one word out of his mouth, is close the magazine, set it on a table, and stand up. When your father says, "Diana, this is my daughter Evelyn. Evelyn, this is Ms. Reid," you make eye contact with Ms. Reid, smile, and say, "It's nice to meet you, Ms. Reid." If she extends her hand, shake it.

Five years down the road when you and your dad run into Ms. Reid in a restaurant or at a movie theater and he says to her, "Diana, do you remember my daughter

Evelyn?” Ms. Reid will remember you as the very poised and polite young woman with impeccable manners whom she met in your father’s office one afternoon. And that’s certainly preferable to the alternative because one day you might want an internship or summer job at your father’s company. You just never know.

YOU DO

Repeat the person’s name to whom you are being introduced.

YOU DON’T

Just say “hello” and think that covers it.

Why

Repeating a person’s name back helps you remember their name for future reference, an invaluable asset.

YOU DO

Stop what you are doing when you are being introduced.

YOU DON’T

Simply wave the hot dog you’re eating at the ball game toward the person you’re being introduced to.

Why

If someone thinks enough of you to introduce you to someone else, don’t embarrass everyone—especially yourself—by acting as if you couldn’t be bothered.