

Rude behaviour: Can anything be done?

This article was written for an online magazine. Read it and think about the messages in the speech bubbles.



**I'LL KEEP
MY FEET OFF
THE SEAT.**

**I WON'T
PLAY MY MUSIC
OUT LOUD.**

**I'LL LOOK
BEFORE
STEPPING OUT.**

**I'LL
OFFER YOU
MY SEAT.**

**I WON'T
EAT SMELLY
FOOD.**

**I WON'T
DROP
LITTER.**

**I WON'T USE
A SEAT FOR
MY BAG.**

WHAT HAPPENED TO MANNERS¹?

There comes a point when you've had enough of the rude behaviour and the disrespect. For me that moment came on a rainy day in London. I was cold, tired and frustrated from a long day at work. As I do every day, I joined the crowds of people fighting to get on the Tube² at Baker Street station. Nobody would care that I had been waiting longest. I would still have to push my way onto the train. There would be just as many people waiting for the next train and it would be just as full. When the doors opened, I didn't stand back and wait for people to get off the train first, as I usually do. I thought 'Nobody else does. Why should I?' A woman complained:

"How rude!"

"Just like everyone else," I called back.

But I was happy with myself. Because I was so quick, I got to the empty seat first. I sat down and closed my eyes, hoping to have a comfortable journey home. At Wembley Park a lot of people got off but three teenagers got on. They sat down across from me, put their feet up on the seats and played music so loud people in the next car were looking over. I wasn't far from home and normally I would just shake my head and give them nasty looks like everyone else, but I was fed up with bad manners.

"There are other people on this train who don't want to listen to your music. Turn it off, please!" I said, aggressively.

"What are you gonna do about it?" they laughed.

Nothing. What could I do? I had to listen to it the rest of the way home.

I think we can all agree that British children today don't have manners. They don't say 'please', 'thank you' or 'sorry'. But we shouldn't blame³ young people. They've learnt it from somewhere! We need to look at our society and what it's become. People don't mean it when they say 'sorry'. Calls are not returned and e-mails don't receive a reply. People are always in such a big hurry. They drive too fast, cut you off and don't stop for pedestrians⁴. Public transport is polluted with noise. A survey of 700 Londoners found that 94% had been bothered at some point by loud conversations on mobile phones and 93% by loud music.

We even laugh when we see bad behaviour at football games or celebrities at war with each other.


In February 2008 Transport for London (TfL) launched their 'Together for London' campaign on the Underground and at bus stations. (I like to call it the 'Don't be a Jerk' campaign!) Now these silly little cartoon characters remind us of how bad it's become. Londoners must promise to be better travellers and to think about others around them. Soon cyclists and drivers will have their own signs. But they don't solve the real problem. The people who respect them are people who are already considerate⁵. Other people just forget or maybe they do it because everybody else does. One of the problems with bad manners is that it leads to more bad manners. If I behave badly, you behave worse and then I behave even worse. And then there are some people, young or old, who are proud of the trouble they cause for others and all they do is laugh. These days people care most about their rights and their needs. Everyone is in competition and it's all about me, me, me! We can only teach our children manners if we agree on them. I don't think we do!

¹manners ['mænəz] – Manieren • ²Tube [tju:b] – the London Underground • ³to blame [bleim] – die Schuld zuschieben • ⁴pedestrian [pi'destrɪən] – Fußgänger /-in • ⁵considerate [kən'sɪdrət] – rücksichtsvoll

1 Rude behaviour

a) Find six examples of rude behaviour in the article. Make notes and write them in the grid below.

b) Now look at the messages on page 1 again. Who do you think they are for?

 c) On the TfL website people can suggest new messages. Here are some of them:

- Be careful when moving with a rucksack on your back.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough (husten) or sneeze (niesen).
- Don't read a newspaper when the train or bus is very full.

What do you think of these messages? Do you think this behaviour is rude? Make your own suggestions and talk about them.

2 Cultural differences?

- a) What rude behaviour do you see on the train or bus in Germany? Is it the same as in England?
 b) What should people do if they are bothered by someone's behaviour?

3 A short film

Go to YouTube on the Internet and watch the 'Together for London' short film. Discuss what happens with your class.

Lösungen

Lösungsvorschläge Seite 2

1

- a)
1. nobody cares about who has been waiting longest
 2. people don't stand back and wait for other people to get off the train first ...
 3. people put their feet up on the seats and play music very loudly
 4. people don't say 'please', 'thank you', 'sorry'
 5. people don't mean it when they say 'sorry'
 6. people don't return calls and answer e-mails
 7. people drive too fast and don't stop for pedestrians

b)
The signs are for the people who do all these things and who don't care about other people.

c)
Individuelle Schülerlösungen

2

a)
In Germany you see the same rude behaviour as in England.

b)
It's very difficult to do something against rude behaviour. If you ask someone to stop their behaviour it can even be dangerous. They might attack you and hurt you. So you need to be a group to be safe. But most people don't want to get involved so they just look away and won't help you. People must learn good behaviour at home or at school.

3

Individuelle Schülerlösungen