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14 Things Good Hosts Never Do

by Mikey Rox on 17 July 2014

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I throw a couple parties a year and host overnight guests regularly as an [Airbnb host](#), but I'm far from the host with the most. Still, I strive to be better. That's why I polled a few friends and experts to see what's on their list of party fouls that a good host would never commit. (See also: [Don't Ruin the Party: 11 Things Good Guests Never Do](#))

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1. Expect Gifts

I don't expect anyone to bring me a gift when I'm hosting — and, honestly, I'd rather they didn't bring a gift unless it's something consumable (who needs more *stuff?*), and I'm not alone. Relationship and etiquette expert April Masini, author of the critically acclaimed online advice column [Ask April](#), agrees. "Good hosts will never insist on gifts. It's great to celebrate your birthday, anniversary or impending nuptials, but insisting or expecting gifts is greedy and bad form. That's not to say you shouldn't be gracious when you do receive presents, but if you're throwing an event to celebrate yourself, make sure the focus is on the celebration — not the bounty."

2. Let the Guests Fend for Themselves for Household Necessities

Susan Callender, founder of [Oh! My Gauche](#), a service dedicated to social savvy and professional skills, says that good hosts will always have information on guest amenities — like password-protected Wi-Fi, washer/dryer, iron and ironing board, etc. — available where the guest can easily find them, like in a binder or folder in the guest bedroom. You also can



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add take-out menus, your home address and phone number (I doubt they have it memorized), and tourism information about your area if you'd like. It'll make the guest's stay hassle-free and more enjoyable.

3. Request That Guests Bring Something (Unless They Insist)

Whitney L. Smith, owner of the lifestyle blog [Pumps & Circumstance](#), thinks it's rude for hosts to ask guests to bring an item to any event other than a potluck. "I love entertaining, and one of the things I don't think is proper for a host to do is to request that guests bring something," she says. There is an exception, however: "If guests *offer* to bring something it's OK to request ice or beverages, but to ask them to bring food is a no-no."

4. Let Guests Clean Up

The trash needs to go outside, your guest is on her way outside. Makes sense, right? Wrong. If they offer, great, but otherwise, hosting is not about efficiency; it's ultimately about providing a service to others.

5. Require Guests to Pay Unexpectedly

Maybe you're young, maybe you don't read *Wise Bread* enough and don't have the savings to throw a party where everything's covered. That's okay. But it needs to be made clear to your guests beforehand.

6. Make a Scene If Someone Brings an Unapproved +1

Gwendolyn Mulholland, owner of the family blog [Finding Sanity in Our Crazy Life](#), suggests that hosts suck it up and keep their mouths shut about a guest who brought a date when plus-ones weren't expected. I agree with her — there's nothing you can do about it now, short of kicking them out, and you don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, do you?

However, to the guest who does this — you should consider yourself lucky when your host doesn't make a scene. Consider that the extra person could throw off the dynamic of the room, especially if guests were invited based on compatibility. Also, the host prepared food for the invited guests, not the surprise guest. What if he or she doesn't like what's being served? What if the host doesn't have enough food? There are a few invariables here that you really don't want to tilt too far. (See also: [Quick Pantry Snacks for Uninvited Guests](#))

7. Allow Anyone Underage to Drink

Advice columnist April Masini chimes in again with another really excellent tip: "Good hosts never encourage underage guests to drink," she reminds us. "Forget being the cool parent or the cool family friend. If there are underage teens and young adults at your home, you are responsible for what you serve them, and even if their parents say it's okay, it's your house, your rules. You'll save yourself a bundle of hassle if there's a potential accident that you are responsible for by serving underage guests, and if there isn't, you've set the standard at your house and everyone will know for next time. Better safe than sorry."

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8. Run Out of Food and Drinks

When I host parties, I abide by the rule of seconds — I buy enough food for every guest to have them. Of course, some guests won't have seconds, so there may be a generous amount of food left (par for the course; it's always better to have more than enough than not enough), in which case you can do a few things:

- Send guests home with a plate for later.



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- Pack the leftovers for lunch.
- Donate the food to a local organization whose volunteers might enjoy the home-cooked or catered food.

9. Neglect to Clean and Properly Stock the Bathroom Prior

Now we're getting into serious territory. If you've failed to stock your bathroom with the necessary essentials, you may very well embarrass the person who needs to call someone to bring the TP. Can you imagine? I'd die of humiliation and then come back to life as the ghost that haunts that terrible host forever. Also, there's this related tip from a friend: "A good host would never invite someone over when their toilet is clogged. Been to a house party like that. Awful, awful experience." Let's leave it at that.

10. Stash Away the Good Bottle of Wine That the Guest Brought

"A good host should always open a nice bottle of wine that a guests brings to a dinner or party," says Kelsey Graves founder of the party-inspiration site We Heart Parties. "It is not polite to keep the nice bottle for yourself. Be sure to open it and share it with your guests." Another way to put it is: Stop being stingy, you lush!

11. Serve Themselves First

Let your guests have first dibs on the food that you've prepared — just like your grandmother did; she didn't eat until everybody else was fed, remember?

12. Allow Pets to Annoy Guests

I love dogs — I have a dog myself — but my husband and I take measures to ensure that he won't annoy guests when we host an event. For shorter gatherings, like a brunch at our house, he's fine in our bedroom for a couple hours. But for longer parties — like around the holidays — it's best for us to send him to daycare for the night where he can play with his furry friends while our guests can enjoy themselves without an animal begging for food or attention.

13. Fail to Introduce Guests Who Don't Know Each Other

If the party is heavy on mixed company, it's the host's job to acquaint everyone at the beginning. Make a habit of making introductions as soon as a guest arrives, so you don't get preoccupied, forget about the person, and let him fend for himself. Some people just aren't comfortable going up to strangers and making small talk. Not that I'm at all bitter or speaking from personal experience, of course.

14. Invite the Wrong Mix of People

If you're inviting a mixed bag of people who don't necessarily know each other, it's wise to consider the potential compatibility of guests as well, especially for a sit-down event or an overnight excursion.

I tend to invite singles that I think might compliment each other and couples with similar interests. For an intimate dinner, for example, I'm definitely not inviting my very religious friends to dine with my LGBT-activist friends. While I'm all for rousing dinner conversation, there are some things better left unsaid. It also wouldn't be very fun for a single friend to attend an event filled with only couples. While not every person will become besties, you at least want the group to enjoy each other's company for a couple hours.

What are some things that you think good hosts should never do? Let me know in the comments below.

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