

Movie Theatre Etiquette

By Jill Kryston, Etiquette Consultant/Trainer

Q: My friends and I like to have a girls' night out at the movies, but we're tired of having to put up with the rude behavior of those who misuse cell phones and text message while the movie is playing. Can you establish some guidelines to follow?

A: Your question touches on two of the biggest pet peeves among movie-goers. However, there are many behaviors to consider while at the theatre so I will start at the beginning...

1. Arrive on time. It's not fair to disrupt others who were courteous enough to be there on time.
2. When entering a row of seats, be sure to face the back of the theatre. It is impolite to place your back end in the face of another.
3. Plan your refreshment purchases and restroom visit before entering the theatre. Open packaged food and make any necessary cell phone calls before the movie previews begin. If you know you'll have to get up during the movie, choose a seat close to the aisle to cause minimal disruption.
4. Once the movie has begun, get into the habit of turning off your cell phone. Pagers and alarm watches should also be silenced. If you absolutely must take a call, make sure your phone is on vibrate mode and exit the theatre to either answer or return the call. Some people think text messaging is a remedy for not talking in the theatre. In fact, the glare of the light is equally disturbing. Check for messages after the movie is over.
5. Use good judgment when taking children to the theatre. Hire a babysitter for children under the age of four and make sure the content is appropriate for older children. Bored and noisy children can disrupt an entire audience. It is best to leave the theatre if this happens.
6. Make sure your voice and movements in the theatre are quiet. Gently chew with your mouth closed, don't slurp your drink, and wait until the movie is over before crumpling your garbage.
7. Be especially cautious of public displays of affection. Although the lights are dim, you are not alone in a theatre.
8. Exit the theatre in a courteous and orderly fashion. Be sure to dispose of your garbage in the appropriate receptacles.

Keep in mind that a movie theatre is a public venue; it is not the same as watching a DVD on your couch. Show respect to others who have invested their hard earned money to watch a long awaited movie. If you are being disturbed by the rude behavior of others, don't hesitate to call it to the attention of an attendant or manager.

Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Email your question(s) to: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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