

Is there be such a thing as London Tube Etiquette?

Do we need Etiquette on the Tube?

* Disclaimer: Political **incorrectness** ahead – abort here if you are prone to snowflake tendencies...

There is email, driving, texting and swimming pool etiquette – but I've yet to see tube etiquette in action. 2 million people a day are squeezing into a spacious tin can. Surely we can agree the situation calls for a smidgen of manners.

Once upon a time in a more civilized society (a society that drinks tea and queues for buses) there once existed unsung rules. But these rules for the underground were not handed down through the generations to those that ride the tube today.

Instead, these invisible rules lurk in the depths of the underground, keeping the remnants of the plague company.

New Era calls for new Rules and Tube Etiquette

Must we make some new rules? We'll base them our collective misery and daily commuting annoyances thus far. Rules such as:

#1 No Eating or Drinking in the

Carriage



Everyone eyes the person clinging to their freshly brewed coffee precariously. The other day I spotted a woman accidentally spill her takeaway coffee all over herself. Thankfully there was now less coffee in the world to land on me. While I've not had coffee spilt on me (YET), I have had yogurt flicked all over me.

Not impressed; I was so appalled I didn't know how to react. What is the etiquette in this situation, I wondered? Should I call them out?

Comfort them by saying sorry? as though its OK to flick yogurt all over my suit jacket anytime. Do you smile and pretend it never happened.

Or do what comes naturally? My reaction was honest. The horror in my face spoke so loudly, words could never have done the look justice.

Mentally I slapped them upside the head. I wondered why anyone would eat something so messy and impossible to open on an overcrowded underground carriage....

Sure, reasons may exist– but if you are going to spill shit, then please like the mysterious coffee woman, be kind enough to spill it all over yourself.



#2 Throwing up

The only thing worse than seeing someone eat on the tube is the regurgitation of the aforementioned food.

Are there times this might be OK. Perhaps in a moment of motion sickness? No, not really, there is nothing that makes it acceptable.

I can say in all honesty that nothing grosses me out more. If you see a superhero tearing out of the carriage at the speed of light – that'll be me.

If you are feeling ill, faint or not well – please get off the train. Ask for help... I am sure it's going to happen sometimes, but it sure does happen more than it should.

#3 The Mobile Phone Stagger

Remember the old cowboy movies? A man would get down off his horse with a bottle of Whiskey in one hand and a gun in the other – staggering across the dusty road.

Nowadays rushing from the tube in the vain attempt to get to

work in time, is that a drunken cowboy you see before you?

No, it's some schmuck who hasn't finished watching TV on their mobile or texting a friend. Checking an email, that will doubtlessly explode into a fiery hell if not read slowly at this exact moment in time.

This staggering numchuck will take up all the space. There is no way past them to the left, or right, over or under. They exist in a parallel universe where only their mobile exists.



#4 Pushing, Shoving and Being Nasty

Every day there are injustices taking place in the world when I see someone get the absolute hump on the tube, I almost laugh out loud.

First world problem – don't take life so personally. The fact that you've taken out all your anger on another person in such a small space is just going to piss you off and everyone else in the vicinity too.

Sure we all feel like yelling, screaming and smacking someone

in the head – luckily most of us control these urges. Do us all a favour and control it too.

5 Man spreading... taking up space

While there is even a '[scientific explanation](#)', according to mainstream media, there is still no excuse for it.

If like me, you are a foreigner and are new to the term [man spread](#), I want to let you know, it's not something you smear on your toast. It is as it sounds, men taking up space.

You know, like animals do when in an aggressive stance. Animals do this to make themselves bigger, scarier, it helps them feel more confident. While it may work for animals, in the real world it comes across as arrogant and greedy.

We all know the seats are small, anyone who has sat between two 300 pounders can attest to that. So let's just stick to the space we have, and not spread ourselves around more than we need to.



6 Respect the elderly (anyone older than you)

London Transport has taken a step to help those that are pregnant with a 'Baby onboard' badge. You can also get a "Please give me a seat" badge if disabled or have a mental health condition. Not sure if you can apply when the tube is driving you mad...



Yet, there is no 'Get the f&%k up, I'm old' badge, which is a good idea as people are not very forthcoming with their seats.

No one looks up from their phone or book long enough to gauge someone's age. Let alone kindly give up their seat.

I remember a time when we were taught to respect anyone older than ourselves and to give up your seat. Those days are well past, it's never too late to give up your seat, and show a bit of respect.



#7 Don't throw yourself under the train

Listen, life's a bitch – and it's a bitch for us all. You were not singled out for some special shit pie. You throwing yourself under the train is not only something the driver needs to live with forever. It also holds up all other trains, transit and passengers. Late to work, or worse held up on the way home, stressed and annoyed, even more than we need to be.

TIP: If, my little pep talk hasn't talked you off the platform. At least, Find a driver that has at least run over two other people. I heard, that if a driver has had three strikes he's out. He can retire early and never have to work again. Very sad, but true.

Please don't throw yourself under the train...

One rule that does exist that we

can break:

“The vow to never ever make eye contact ever”.

Do people avoid eye contact so they don't see that 110-year-old lady that needs a seat? By keeping all eyes on their phone – even if sitting in the priority seat – they can avoid getting up.



Looking someone in the eye reminds you that they are another human being. This is the last thing the people want as they push, shove and crush anyone in their path to a seat.

Once they have their seat they won't give it up lightly – whatever the social norms.

Today, integrity ebbs away and people know the best course of action yet decline to act upon it.

Research has shown that if one person stands up to a thief, bully or injustice others follow. Yet, it also works the other way around.

Read [the spoof that caused a stir on the tube when signs threatened penalty if anyone made eye contact on tube.](#)



Becoming a Zen Commuter – Yoda of the Underground

Early in my commute, I spotted someone who remained standing and giving up the seat to others purposefully. In the midst of all the raucous and chaos, they stood out like a Zen master in a storm – a Yoda of the underground.

Totally suffered a fangirl crush – I was in awe.

I finally experienced the [side effect of kindness](#). Scientific research has shown that when you are kind to others you not only get a shot of feel-good endorphins but so does everyone else around you.

Now, while you may still see me diving head first into a seat, if and when these rare beasts are available. Now and again I also strive for a bit of inner zen and stand up to give others the opportunity to sit.

In doing so, I may have even caught a few peoples eye, an odd smile and nod of the head. Kindness is eternal, and no matter where you are, or who you are – let it travel with you – it goes a long way.

Resources:

See the percentage of other people that [share your commute](#):

[Fun facts about the London Tube](#)

[Transport of London](#)– sign up for travel updates and alerts

[Tube Status](#) – updates and delays in real time

[Commuter Club](#) (discounted rail and tube tickets)

Most lovely photos gratefully provided by:

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Nature Lovers Guide to London

Putting ‘Nature’ and ‘London’ in the same sentence may seem like an oxymoron. However, you may be surprised at how green and lush London can be once you know where to look.

As a visitor to the city, there are plenty of great museums

and places to visit such as the [British Museum](#), [Tate Modern](#), [Victoria and Albert Museum](#). All super places to visit, however, too many hours indoors can leave you feeling like you've had the life sucked out of you.

Which is when you might want to escape to a park, such as Hyde Park, Regents or Green Park. Be warned that these may be full of all the same people you ran into in the Museum. The solution is to find a few less famous but more fabulous greens spots around the city.

These quiet lush places are the go-to when you start to feel a bit drained. A bit of fresh air and a place to recharge is the perfect natural remedy, and here's a list of my favourites:

[St Dunstan in the East Church](#)

This church is tucked away in the back streets of the financial district, and can feel somewhat clandestine solely by the fact that many people that work nearby don't even know of its existence.

It withstood and was patched up after the great fires of 1666, before being bombed during the blitz in 1941. Many of the structural walls of the old church remain standing although the roof is gone. It's a treat to watch nature reclaim the space. There is a garden and benches to sit and while you enjoy a coffee or lunch.

It's a stone's throw from the [Tower of London](#), so worth a visit before or after your tour.

Cost: Free

Address: St. Dunstan Hill, London



[Hampstead Heath](#)

Hampstead Heath particularly beautiful park thanks to its lakes, easy accessibility and incredible views of the sprawling city that it overlooks. It's the perfect place for a picnic – depending on the weather – or just a stroll to stretch your legs and get some fresh air and exercise. Cost: Free



Inner City Squares

There are so many to list, it is really best to look on google maps and pick one nearby to wherever you might be on the day.

Go grab a takeaway coffee or a sandwich and find a quiet bench to sit on as you watch the seasons float on by.

A few of my favourites are Bloomsbury, Russell and Soho Square. Each with their own history, stories and famous plaques that are plastered on the affluent buildings nearby.

Cost: Free

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Listing themselves as the most famous Botanic Gardens in the world, when you arrive you'll see why.

You can visit for a whole day and still not see it all. There are glass-houses, endless walking paths, treetop walkways, flower gardens as well as libraries of antique plant books, fungi specimens as well as a science, educational and specimen areas. After all this, you might also want to recharge in the cafe, where you can sit and relax, enjoy the fresh food and endlessly green views.

Cost: £13.75 for adults, £3.50 for children

Address: Kew Gardens



Chelsea Flower Show

This is a big colourful bonanza is held once year in May, and shows of the best of the best of the English flowers and gardens. You'll see where the term an 'English Garden', comes from, as it's certainly no half-baked affair. This is a serious business!

For the those of us that are easily enchanted by the colours, shapes, and smells of all that flowers offer us, it is the perfect way to spend an afternoon.

The [Royal Horticultural Society](#) can be [found here](#) and hosts a range of events throughout the country, so even if you are not in London in May, you can visit their calendar to find other events that may be of interest. Website: [Chelsea Flower Show](#)

There is an incredibly beautiful movie based on the real-life story of Mary Reynolds. Who was the youngest winner of the Chelsea Flower Show. She works to bring elements of the wild back into our parks and gardens.

The [Dare to be Wild Movie](#) can be found on Amazon.

Hackney City Farm

There aren't just lush green gardens to visit, in some places you can also pitch in and get your hands dirty. You can even visit and pet the animals on the farm, stop in at the shop and buy produce that is grown here on the farm.

Whether you have kids or if you just feel like doing something completely different while in town by visiting and supporting a local initiative, then head over to [Hackney City Farm](#). The cost to visit: Free

Haringey Parkland Walk and Bat Project

There is a lovely Parkland walk in North London. It will take you along an old railway line, which is so incredibly rich in foliage you may be mistaken for thinking that you are in the countryside. You'll come across an old unused station that nature has reclaimed, and at the end of the walk you can visit the local Bat Project.

The bats are sleeping, undisturbed during the day, which is why it's most shut off to the public. However, it still has is a gorgeous spot in an 'Adam's Family kind of way'.

There are always ongoing projects to protect wildlife around London. If you would like to keep an eye on what is going on, or if you live or are visiting for a longer period you can volunteer and participate in the projects by going to [Wild London website](#).

Cost: Free

Address: Parkland Walk, Haringey

[Map and information here](#)



Visiting these Lush Green Foreign worlds without having to step outside:

For those that would love some inspired reading, either while you are on the tube (underground) or have a long-haul destination.

Or perhaps you are an armchair traveller, you can still enjoy it all from the comfort of your own home.

I highly recommend these books to put you in the mood, or to inspire your love of nature, travel and endless green gardens:

- [The Signature of Things](#) by Elizabeth Gilbert.
- [Gathering Moss, A Natural and Cultural History of Moss](#), by Robin Wall Kimmerer.
- [Earthy joys by Philippa Gregory](#), Historical, Fictional and Green.
- [The Secret Life of Plants](#) & [The Hidden Life Of Trees](#) will have you looking at plants and trees in a whole new way. Did you know

they're telepathic? That they faint before you even think of ripping a leaf off... so much fascinating reading.

Greenery is always is worth visiting:

Wherever you go, even in the biggest cities in the world finding a bit of time to enjoy the greenery around us is beneficial to us, our health and beneficial to the plants and trees. It's our appreciation and involvement that keeps local councils aware of the importance of these spaces in our lives. Whether we live there or we are just a visitor passing by, we all need a little bit of greenery and fresh air in our lives.

Other articles/ resources that may interest you:

[Stunning green Spaces in London via Secret London Tours by locals](#)

[25 Stunning Green Space in London](#) by Timeout

Stunning photos, thanks to:

Hampstead Heath Photo by [Amadeusz Misiak](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Kew Gardens: Photo by [Jack Young](#) on [Unsplash](#)