



“1860s Etiquette Quiz”

Based on actual rules that appeared in advice books of the day.
True/False. Answers given at end.

1. A lady was not permitted to sit with her legs crossed at the ankles or knees.
2. A lady was permitted to have a glass of wine at a private dinner party.
3. A lady was permitted to self-medicate with opiates.
4. A lady was not permitted to laugh quietly in private conversation.
5. A lady was permitted to sing at a private party.
6. A lady was permitted to exclaim “Goodness gracious!” and “Mercy!” in private conversation.
7. A lady was permitted to be alone in a room with a gentleman for a few minutes, as long as he was a close family friend.
8. When out in public, a lady was not permitted to walk quickly, swing her arms, speak in a loud voice, or call to a friend on the other side of the street.
9. A lady traveling with a male companion was encouraged to give him her purse so he could pay any costs she incurred on her journey.

10. The following activities were permitted for ladies: sewing, knitting, embroidery, drawing, painting, playing a musical instrument, ballroom dancing, horseback riding.
11. A lady was not permitted to go riding alone.
12. If a lady was riding with a man, she was permitted to precede her escort over a jump.
13. When riding with an escort, a lady was permitted to suggest the direction and set the pace of the ride.
14. For the sake of safety, under certain circumstances a lady was sometimes permitted to ride astride rather than sidesaddle.
15. When out walking, a lady was permitted to stop on the sidewalk in order to pull on her gloves or smooth her hair.
16. In private conversation with a close friend and no one else present, a lady was permitted to roll her eyes.

Answers: 1. **True.** 2. **False.** A half glass of wine might be permitted at home in honor of a special family occasion. 3. **True.** Liquid opium was dispensed without a prescription, in small bottles so a lady could keep it with her throughout the day. 4. **True.** 5. **True.** Singing and playing an instrument were considered genteel social arts that allowed a lady to display her accomplishments to friends in a modest way. 6. **False.** No exclamations of any sort were allowed. 7. **False.** Being alone with a gentleman was permitted only if he was a family member. Or possibly if he was really, really old. 8. **True.** 9. **True.** This was encouraged because it allowed a lady to avoid interacting with low sorts of people, such as coach drivers and innkeepers. 10. **True.** These were all approved activities. 11. **True.** A lady seen riding without male supervision would raise questions about where she was going and what she intended to do when she got there. 12. **False.** 13. **False.** The male in the party would make all such decisions. The lady must follow his lead. 14. **False.** Riding sidesaddle could be dangerous, but the woman's safety was never a consideration. 15. **False.** These were considered to be intimate dressing/grooming behaviors and therefore must never be performed in public. 16. **False.** Rolling your eyes was never permitted, although you might be doing that right now!